

A BURLESQUE REVUE OF  
GLAMOUR ART AND ARTISTS  
COMPLETE WITH WISECRACKS,  
DAMES, DOLLS, &  
BARE NAKED LADIES

BY  
*Jm Sike*

**PIN-UP**  
THE ILLEGITIMATE  
**ART**





Jm Silke

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## EYE CANDY

*"Their legs in action, that's the attraction.  
There's nothing like a dame!"*  
—Al Dubin/*Dames* (1934)

### ANYTHING GOES!

That's the credo of a musical revue and of this book. There's no narrative tension and no cliffhanging. No story. It's just a lineup of nubile, titillating lovelies cavorting from page to page as they're backed by bits of nonsense, self-deprecating humor, and pagan religion. It's a party. A frolic. A low-low celebration of everything polite society considers false; flesh, color, bubble beads, skins, and impossibly beautiful women who have trouble keeping their clothes on.

To the world of legitimate art, what you'll see in this book is worthless, merely a parade of visual confections, *eye candy* that is of no more value than a penny bubble gum. Jim Silke, who is responsible for most of the beauties on parade, puts it this way:

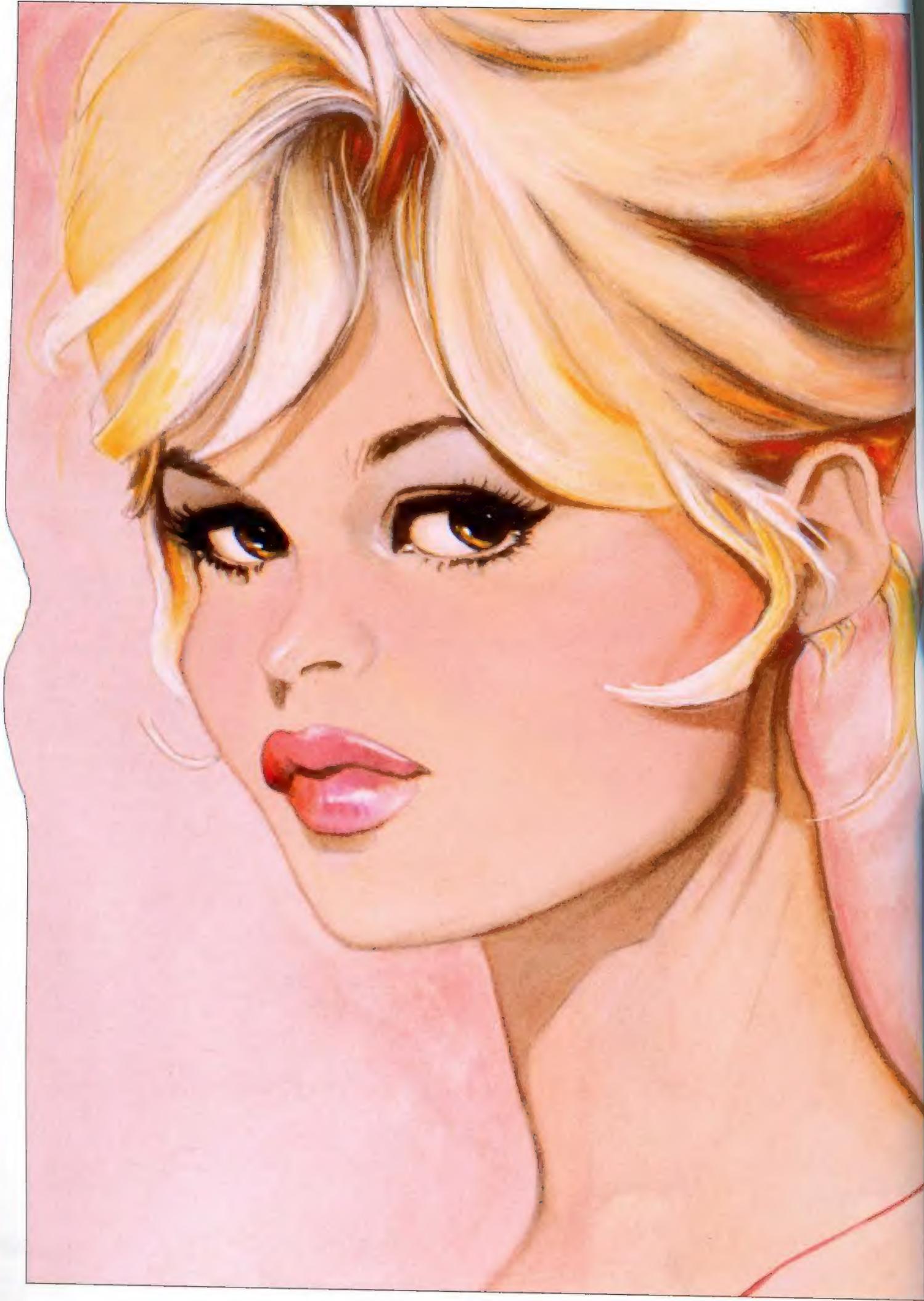
"The Lords of High Culture, academics, the privileged and religious classes, even those belonging to the fashionable commercial art world, dismiss *girl art* as trash; as pictures of pretty girls designed, staged, and costumed with the precise aim of stimulating the viewer's most vulgar urges. For these people, *pin-up* art has no redeeming social values, no aesthetic grace, no political manifesto, not even a whiff of hauteur devil worship to delight the chic Nihilists, nothing to recommend it in either the classical or modernist art traditions. No quality of redemption whatsoever."

Silke, of course, tends to get a tad uptight about the subject. That's why we decided not to let him write this book, so he wouldn't bore you with erudite opinions about the work of Kitagawa Utamaro and Edgar Degas. If we did, he just wouldn't be able to get it through

his head that given a choice between an abstract contemplation of art and the reality of Britney Spears' belly button, we're going to go with the belly button every time.

Silke, being seventy-three years old, and a relic of the twentieth century, is a victim of that all consuming affliction that pervaded the arts of that era, being *important*. In those days, pursuing the aesthetics of erotic beauty, the glories of nature, or the dictates of romance or realism meant nothing. To be artistic, you had to be a revolutionary, a rule breaker with a rebel vision, an innovator, a loner, and an original, one-and-only individualist who shocked and shook the world of art. Anything less and you were not important. Aware of this affliction and nauseated by it when it overcomes him, Silke has fought hard against it all his life.







Above: *After the Bath*, pencil and gouache on colored paper. Opposite: *Native American* based on several photos of Elle Sommer, ink and watercolor on paper. Private Collection.

But despite his life of protest, Silke is still afflicted. He can't help it. It's in his blood. Despite the fact that the only real money spent today is on vintage pin-up art done by artists who are all dead, despite the fact that the collectors who buy their work do so because it's kitsch, not art, Silke still holds the inane belief that trading in female beauty, in *bedtime babies*, *ding-dong girls*, and *devil women* made of paper, is not only a valid profession, but one that can, if executed with passion and craftsmanship, actually have some artistic value.

As I've said, he's out of control.

To his credit, Silke doesn't include himself among those pin-up artists of value. But then how could he? He didn't have the "balls" to become a glamour artist until he was sixty-five and has only been at it for eight years. Nevertheless, Silke is persistent in his idea, and insisted that this book be titled, not simply *Pin-Up Art*, but *Pin-Up: The Illegitimate Art*. This is because he sees some nebulous connection, as you'll find out, between the *illegitimate theater* and girly art.

I suppose there is some similarity between the overt sexuality of burlesque, carnival, the commedia dell'arte, and pin-up art, and their appeal to the general public is also similar. Back in the twenties, thirties and forties, during the classic pin-up era, you didn't find calendar art in fashionable homes or avant-garde art galleries, but in blue collar workplaces such as auto garages and tire shops whose grease-stained mechanics went home to three-hundred-pound wives who went to bed every night wearing a head full of pink, plastic hair curlers. But to link pin-up art to popular theater today seems ludicrous. The general public has no interest in it, and there is no market for it, except for a very small, select group of buyers whose motives are, at best, suspect.

Consequently, to me it seems to be a giant waste of time exploring the possibility that "wink and titter" art has some hidden quality of redemption. But Silke insists I give it a try so here we go. Why he insists, of course, is another story but I'll save that comedy for the next chapter.

If you get bored, just look at the pictures.



# MIDNIGHT FROLICS

*"My trouble is dames!"*

—Milton Caniff in *Argosy* (1961)

**S**ilke was born in 1931 in Pasadena, California, a small rural community struggling through the Depression, and as far away from the naughty, sophisticated world of female allure, and the profession of pin-up artist, as a child could get. The thirties were a chaste, puritan time in America. Most people believed that any trade in sex was restricted to the underworld of the forbidding big cities, and the polite society folks in Pasadena would never even consider using the word sex, let alone the possibility of trading in it. But social taboo wasn't the only reason the thought of spending his life drawing naked women was never going to occur to little Jimmie.

He was the son of a Baptist minister.

Now, before you get the wrong idea, I'm obliged to let him point something out. "My

father was a very unusual man. He wasn't some fanatic who wandered out into the desert, put his hand on a hot rock, and talked to God. He was a quiet, thoughtful, considerate, open-minded man of considerable wisdom and intellect. He had a Ph.D. in theology, but he wasn't a preacher. He was a Minister of Religious Education, which meant he ran the Sunday school and youth groups. His idea of a religious ministry was to be there for the members of his congregation, and to believe in them no matter how bad their troubles. He wasn't out to save the world or even to save souls. His job was to help people help themselves get through the day. And he did just that. As far as I was concerned, he made a decision very early that I could choose my path in life for myself and become whatever I wanted to become. He only spoke of it a few times, but it was always understood."

Silke, of course, didn't realize that this was a damn risky way to raise a boy afflicted with an incorrigible imagination and insatiable curiosity. But his father, aware of these afflictions as well as his child's serious stubborn streak, no doubt realized no other course made sense, and set him loose into the world of chance and adventure to find his own way. Trouble, naturally, was out there waiting for him.

For instance, Silke started school in Pasadena, California, which, in the early thirties, had just adopted a progressive educational system. That meant that every five-year-old entering kindergarten was allowed to pick the subject he or she wished to learn: spelling, arithmetic, reading, writing, or building the farm. Little Jimmie picked the farm. When the next choice period came, he



Some of the many pin up style album covers art directed by Silke for Capitol Records. *Mood Latino* modeled by Linda Harris, photographed by George Jerman. *Queen Lace*, Silke can remember the models' names, but the girl in the beauty mentioned earlier for his comic strip, but then used it on this album cover.

world that attracted me would eventually discard the quest for inner satisfaction which had dominated the arts, philosophies, and religions of the world, and replace it with the insatiable appetite for sensory stimulation which now pervades our culture. Back then, for me it was just one grand adventure. Everywhere I looked, the world was new."

Art school, of course, was where he first ran into serious trouble with the female.

His first class was figure drawing from the nude model. "One night we had a particularly

nubile model and I was determined to render her superb body perfectly. But then I became embarrassed on realizing I had given all my energy and interest to her breasts, so I timidly asked the instructor if I had made them too large. He studied my drawing for a while then politely asked me where her breasts were."

That happened in 1951. Silke was over forty years away from becoming a pin-up artist because he couldn't draw. He dropped out of Art Center School when he realized the instructors couldn't draw either, and studied with the legendary draftsman Herb Jepson.

"I followed him wherever he taught: his own Jepson Art Institute, Chouinard Art Institute, USC, Kahn Art Institute, and a couple other schools. But, I still couldn't draw."

Unknown to Silke, however, he wasn't that far away from trading in female flesh.

The Army drafted him out of art school and he spent two years painting nametags and training aids for the Cook School at Fort Ord, California. Evenings and weekends were spent taking the Famous Artists Advanced Program, a correspondence course taught

by the most respected illustrators of that time: Norman Rockwell, Robert Fawcett, Al Parker, Austin Briggs, Harold Von Schmidt, Jon Whitcomb, etc. On being discharged in 1955, he took his portfolio to every commercial art studio in Los Angeles, over thirty of them, and got turned down by all of them. He then tried the advertising agencies, going to New York before he found work as a gofer for the art director at Heinz Advertising. From there he moved around L.A. working as an art director for several small advertising agencies, and finally, in 1957, for Capitol Records where, to his surprise, he was asked to hire gorgeous models, costume them, and have them photographed for album covers. Without realizing it, he had jumped headfirst into the pin-up business.

In the fifties, even the commercial art world considered girl art déclassé. The lowest. But Silke never gave it a thought. He was in his element. "Most album covers in those days, like most paperback book covers, featured gorgeous ladies in revealing wardrobes and we did our best to hire Hollywood's most beautiful women, usually young actresses on their way up: Fay Spain, Mary Tyler Moore, Ava Gardner, Sandy Warner, Linda Gray, Abby Dalton, and the city's best models. Dolores Grier, Nancy Nelson, Dolores Erickson, and many others. My favorites were actresses Yvette Mimieux and Victoria Vinton (a.k.a. Angela Dorian)."

During this time, he spent his nights photographing and drawing models in the hope of creating a comic strip, "Gladius," the story of a Roman gladiator. The heroine, Leto, he modeled after Brigitte Bardot. But he soon gave it up. "I just couldn't get Leto to behave on paper the way I wanted her to. She was never cute enough, or animated enough." What he's saying is that his drawing still wasn't good enough. He didn't, however, stop trying.

From 1957 to sometime in 1991, when he went to work full time on his graphic novel, *Rescals in Paradise*, Silke's career truly followed a path of chance and adventure. He worked as an art director, a magazine publisher, editor and designer, an illustrator, a record producer, glamour photographer, model, costume designer, production designer, historian, novelist, and screenwriter. During all that time, he spent his late-night hours drawing on small newsprint pads. His subjects were primarily women, Bettie Page, Diane Webber—the famous West Coast nude model, and Brigitte Bardot. He did it for fun. Those hours are what he now calls his *Midnight Frolics*.



His various careers, however, also prodded him along his accidental path to becoming a girl artist.



Top: Two pages of drawings of Brigitte Bardot taken from one of Silke's "Midnight Frolics" sketchbooks. Bottom: Silke's drawing of Spanish actress Teresa Del Rio in 1960; she was to be Neffer in his comic strip, the same character that later appeared in *Rescals in Paradise* (1985) and was based on Claudia Cardinale.



pin-up business, photographing the best of the rising young actresses: Barbara Parkins, Sharon Tate, Sue Ann Langdon, Anjanette Comer, Raquel Welch, Susan Seaforth, and dozens of others, as well as his favorites, Jackie Lane and Victoria Vetri, who you see on these pages. But indulging his talent and imagination in the flesh and fantasies of these beauties, as much as it was fun, was not the most fun.

*Cinema* gave Silke entree to the most creative talents in the film industry, and he was able to meet and spend hours interviewing directors Robert Aldrich, Jean Renoir, Alfred Hitchcock, Fred Zinnemann, Richard Brooks, Akira Kurosawa, Georges Franju, Howard Hawks, and many of the other creative talents in Hollywood, including production designers such as Robert Boyle and the famed Italian costume designer Nino Novarese. And it was through the magazine that he met two of his closest friends, film directors George Stevens and Sam Peckinpah.

Both men shaped his aesthetic philosophy.

With Peckinpah, it was the work. His credo was "Don't talk about it, do it!" which he uttered in an angry shout. He also had a second credo and Silke, with a chuckle in his voice, fondly recalls hearing it for the first time. "Columbia Pictures called me in panic on a Tuesday, and on Thursday morning I was on an airplane flying to Mexico City. The costumes for *Major Dundee* were screwed up and my job was to fix them. From Mexico City, I flew to Durango, and at five in the next morning they drove me to a little Indian village where the film was in its first week of shooting. I wasn't there ten minutes when over a loudspeaker, came the assistant director's voice screaming, 'Silke, get your ass in here! Your department has fucked up!' I ran about three hundred yards to the road to an old abandoned hacienda that was full of nothing but extras and about two hundred mounted troopers, both Union and Confederate. They were in a column of twos, ready to march and Sam was on the crane hanging in the shot. I ran up to him and asked what the hell was wrong. He gave me his update, glared, and growled, 'Don't bring me questions, bring me answers!'"

The trooper was a pennant flag that was to represent the Confederate unit. Silke had made it back to Hollywood, and done a hell professional job. But if he had read the



**Top:** Angela Lansbury (as Diane Webber) photographed by Silke (1965) and eventually featured in *Cinema* magazine (1965)  
**Top:** Diane Webber drawing, pencil on newspaper, done in 1965  
**Bottom:** Diane Webber sketchbook drawing, pencil on newspaper, done in 1965



script carefully, he would have discovered that the flag was to have been made by the Confederate prisoners from a piece of cloth torn off a uniform. Discovering his mistake, Silke tore a piece off of actor John Davis Chandler's uniform and he and Chandler made the flag, finishing about thirty seconds before the first shot.

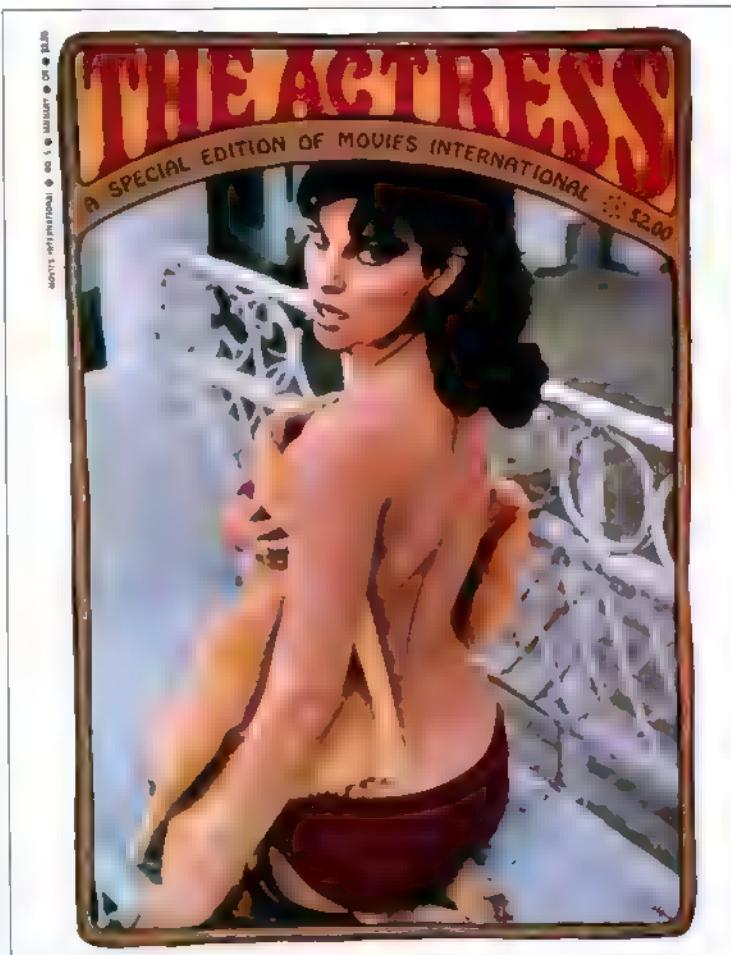
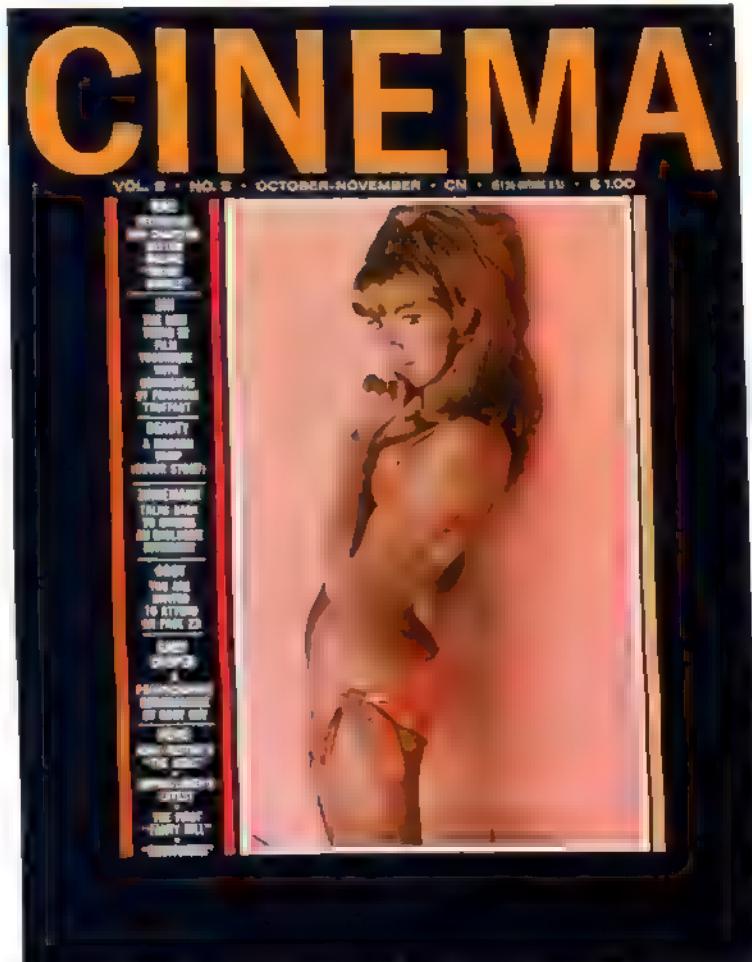
That's how Silke's film career started, by designing costumes for *Major Dundee*, which he also did in the coming years for *The Wild Bunch*, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, and others. About a year after *Major Dundee*, he was under contract to Peckinpah as a writer. One meant twenty pages a day, seven days a week, a lot of three A.M. phone calls, and a whole lot of coffee.

"There were also parties with our families on holidays and weekends, parties that were more like fiestas. But mostly it was constant writing, each script a daily and nightly search for the story, and especially for the characters. More often than not, both our heroes and villains were heavies. Bad guys. And the questions were always the same: Who were they deep inside? Where was their bottom line? Where was their pride? Their sense of worth? It was a search for some kind of quality of redemption. Sam really put it all together in *The Wild Bunch*. As bad as they were, the bunch shared a kind of loyalty to each other that, along with a innate vitality and daring, set the American West. That was their quality of redemption, that and the laughter at the strong."

You can easily see from the above why we wanted Silke write this book. Give him a hand to keep talking like that, then cut to the Raymund Chandler. "But down these mean streets, a man must go who is not a man," says Dashiell Hammett, as Robert Browning, Marlene Dietrich, and Humphrey Bogart and all his other favorites. As for his other philosophies have something to do with why he likes to paint nubile women in the last of suntan oil.

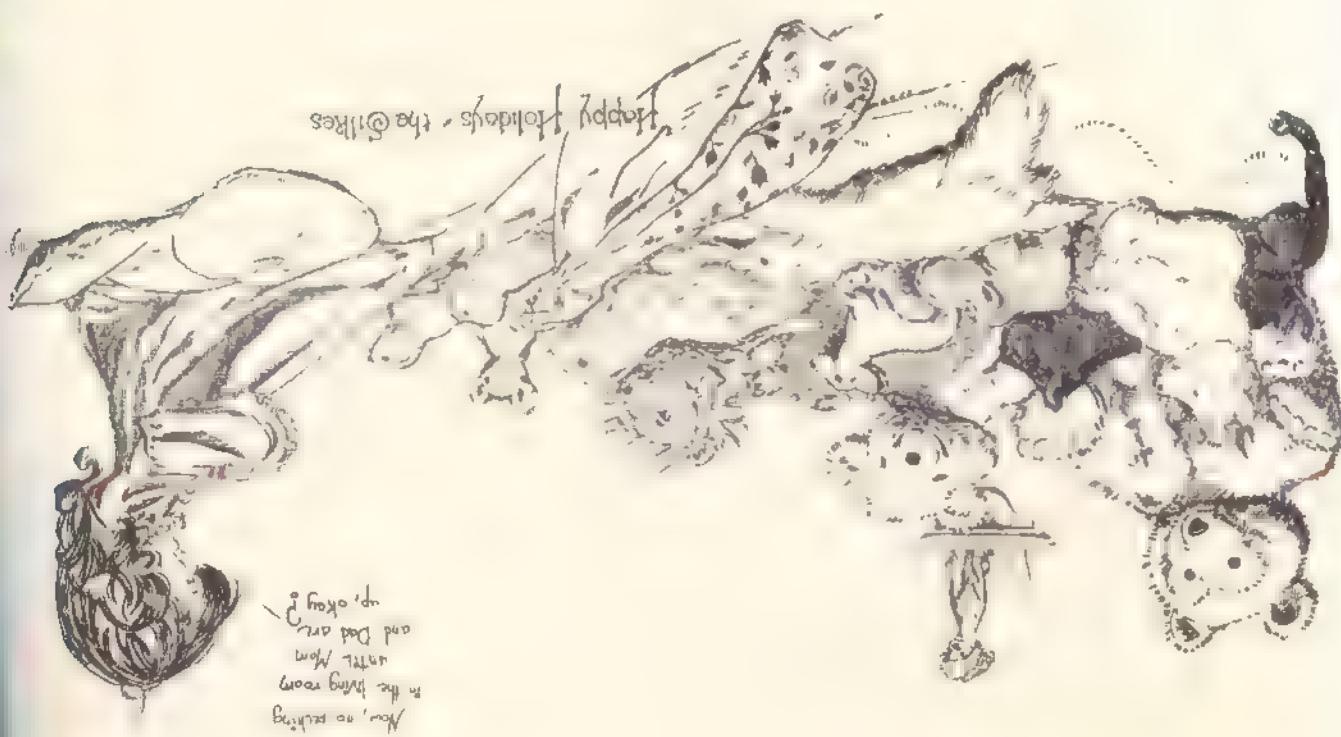
Now for some photographic pin-ups. Here's the gorgeous boudoir of a wife, Marlene Dietrich. Peckinpah married her twice, and Silke was best man twice.

John Silke, called from Peckinpah was a man of focus, not the amount of focus he needed to do anything in life. He was well to be a professional



Marlene Dietrich is pictured by Silke for Cinema magazine in 1970. She is also pictured here for The Actress magazine. John Silke is pictured here for The Actress magazine in 1962.

For 1955 to 1995 when *Rescues in Paradise* was published the only artwork consistently produced by Slite was for many Christmas cards such as this one done in the 1970s. The models are his daughter Tammye Slite and the collection of slited animals.



One of the many costume sketches done for Sam Peckinpah's film *Major Dundee* (1965). Pencil and oil pastel on paper.



And, being diametrically opposite personalities, they depended on each other. Silke is a defiant romantic with a hardcore realist underpinning. Peckinpah is a defiant realist with a hardcore romantic underpinning.

With George Stevens (*Gunga Din*, *The More the Merrier*, *A Place In the Sun*, *Shane*, *Giant*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*), Silke was shaped by their conversations. "I read scripts and books for him—*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *The Stalking Moon*, *The Secret of Santa Vittorio*, and a number of others—but never worked for him. We did plan a film based on Rudyard Kipling's poems, which we alternately titled *Guns and Drums* and *Drums and Guns*. But it was more for the fun of discussing Kipling than actually making a film. We had breakfasts, lunches, and dinners together, went to the movies together, and just sat in his apartment, or drove around old Hollywood so he could show me where he shot the Laurel and Hardy short films, where his first job was, etc. We talked about everything, not just the movies he had made, but war, philosophy, poetry, and Kipling, always Kipling. We never argued, but we often didn't agree, so we would discuss the differences in a slow probing of each other's minds. And I mean slow. As director Jack Ford once said to me, 'You know George! He calls you up, gives you a five-minute monologue—and uses four words.'"



Silke and Stevens discussed all kinds of ideas, storytelling is a trip on which you will get lost in order to find your way: without chaos within you, you will never be a shooting star; the source of beauty

More Silke's cover for Bettie Page: Queen of Hearts (1995). Private Collection. Middle: A page from *Rascals In Paradise* (1995) featuring Diana Spice Saunders, a character based on Brigitte Bardot but with a more...and attitude influenced by Madonna. Right: Silke's cover for *Rascals In Paradise* (1995). Private Collection



is a wound; the only way to win is to lose; beauty begins where analysis ends, and on and on. And Silke is convinced that all these ideas have something to do with his choice of frivolous, sexy sugar babies as his subject matter, and how he stages, costumes, and paints them. In short, his time with Stevens and Peckinpah indirectly led him to trade in beautiful flesh. But he's very vague as to just how that happened.

The reality, of course, is quite different. When Silke finally learned to draw well enough to produce *Rascals In Paradise* and *Bettie Page: Queen of Hearts*, he set up a booth at the San Diego Comic Convention to sell his work. But the only thing people wanted to buy were his drawings of beautiful women. So he did more, sold them, and "presto," he's a pin-up artist.

Money, folks, that's the bottom line.

But there is something to what Silke claims. There has always been a tension in his life between his childhood morality and his adult dreams and profession. He was, like almost everyone else of his generation, taught that girly art was dangerous filth that would take his mind off his homework, church, even basketball, and lead him astray. Well, he not only went astray but also, at least from some people's point of view, has gone in the

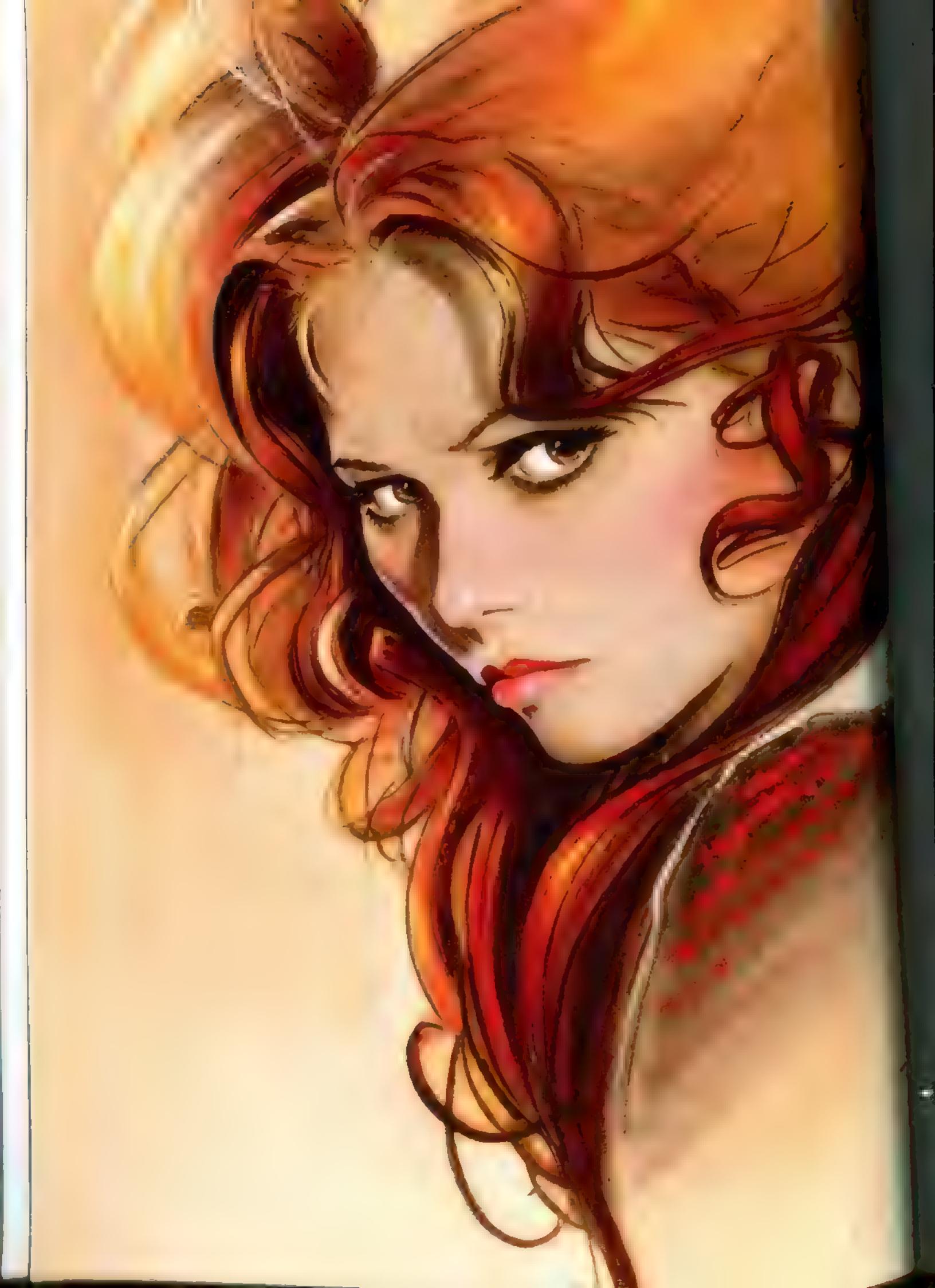
opposite direction in life than his father did. That's probably why, along with the affliction of being important, he'd like to think there might be some quality of redemption in his work. That's not likely, as you'll see, but he did find out something basic about himself from his discussions of Kipling with George Stevens.

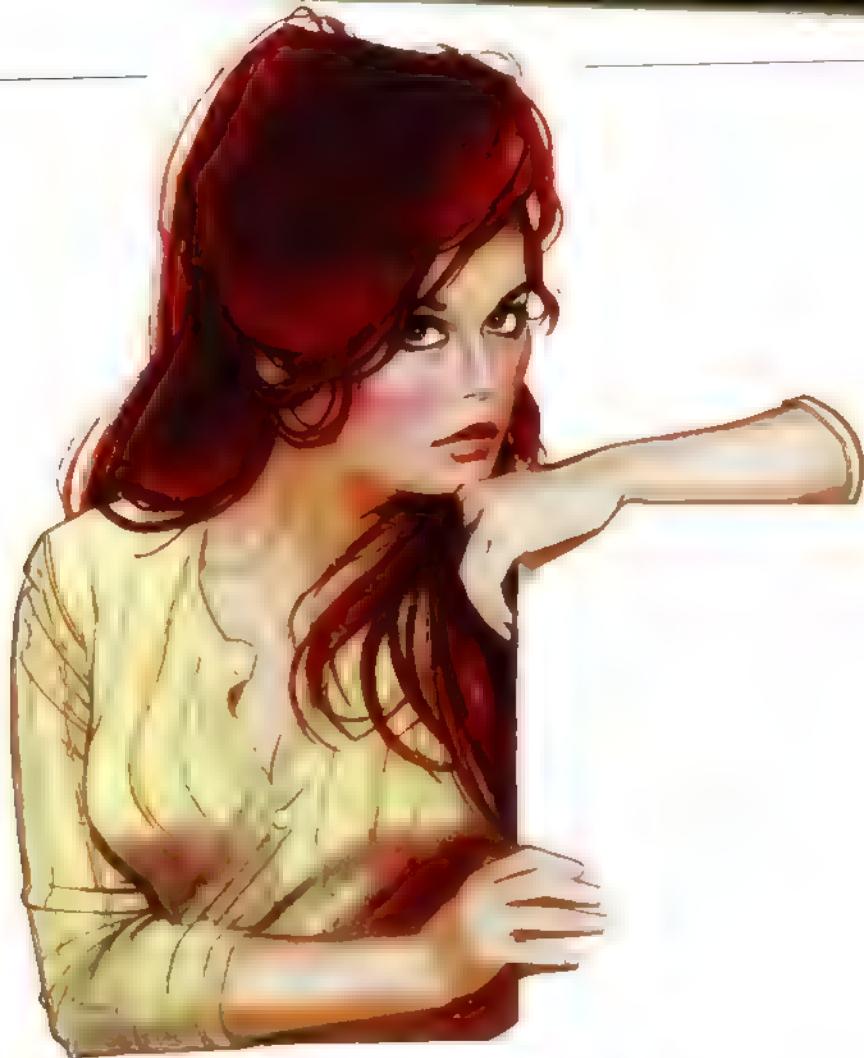
Rudyard Kipling based his philosophy on ancient Hindu beliefs. For the poet, it was the planting and tilling of the garden that was important, not the blossoming of the rose. The goal in life is not at the end of the trail, but in the traveling of the trail, in the sheer joy of just doing it, of living, and exulting in the work, in the toil of life. Silke, while talking with Stevens, came to understand this, and realized that in his own way he has always adhered to it, if not by intellect then by instinct.



His *Midnight Frolics* are not a myth. He's done hundreds and hundreds of drawings, the great majority of them of women that no one has seen but him. And today, when he knows that he can sell every *Vampirella* drawing he makes, he is still just as likely to draw Olive Borden, Lily Damita, or some other lovely you have probably never heard of.

More than the money, Silke enjoys the work, the simple doing of it: photographing the model, selecting the paper, the slide of the graphite pencil over it, and most of all, picking the girl.





## LES GIRLS

*Age can not wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy  
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry  
Where most she satisfies.*  
—Shakespeare / *Antony & Cleopatra* (1490)

I admit that quoting William Shakespeare in a book determined to wallow in the lowdown and profane world of *hot tomatoes* and *bare naked ladies* is pretentious. But I'm not comparing the Bard's artistry to the art of the pin-up. I'm simply trying to make a point about the women Silke draws, and how his artwork is more about his models than about him. So bear with me.

First of all, I have to remind you that Cleopatra was real. She had to scrub her teeth, bathe, put on body makeup, and cope with her teenage appetites just like Beyoncé or your sister. Plus, she had real problems. At sixteen, she became Pharaoh of Egypt and had to marry her pimple-faced wimp of a brother. Nevertheless, she beguiled, seduced, and manipulated the two

most powerful men in the ancient world. Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.

Scores of plays, paintings, motion pictures, novels, poems, songs, burlesque routines, and even comic books have used her as the principal subject, each portraying her in the most lascivious, enticing, and deadly ways possible. Shakespeare's description of her, however, set the standard by which we judge, not only Cleopatra, but also every femme fatale.

But Shakespeare never met her. He made her up.

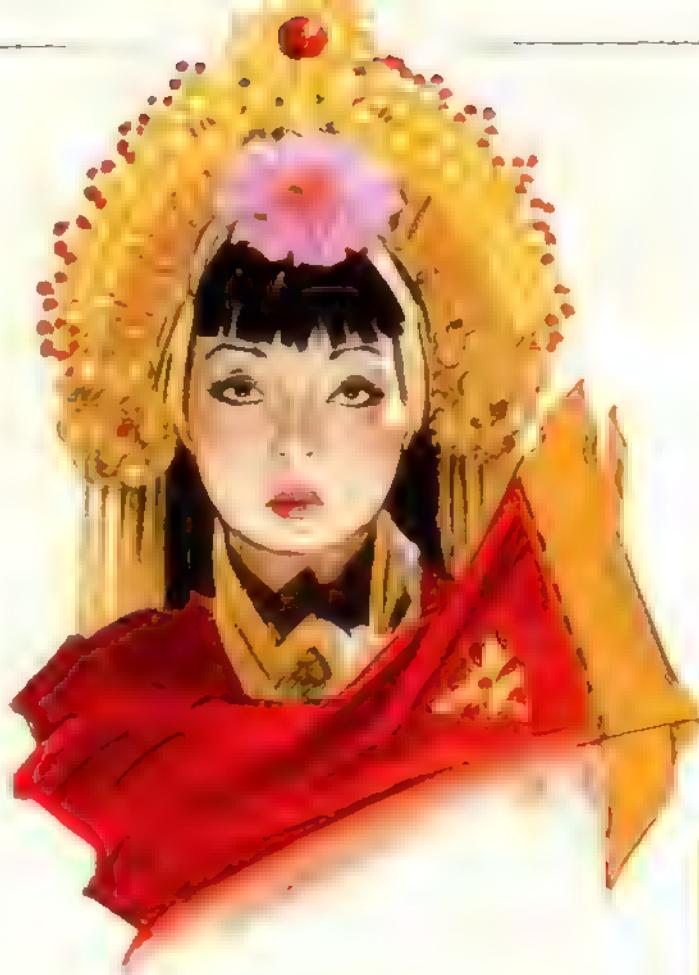
Nevertheless, the Bard based her on somebody. He had a model. A serving wench, working girl, slumming aristocrat, whatever. He had somebody, and I'm sure

that Silke, for one, would love to have met her.

Every artist telling a story about or creating an image of a human being, whether with artwork, writing, music, dance, or sculpture needs a model to work from. I know that there are those who believe some artists work entirely from their imagination, but the actuality is this: those artists have an almost photographic visual memory as well as a vivid imagination and, as they draw, the two come together. When that occurs, the style of the artist dominates the end result.

But in pin-up art, the model must dominate, must be the essential ingredient. Not the artist.

The model is the subject of the picture.



Anna Mae Wong in, from top to bottom, *The Daughter of the Dragon* 1931; *The Chinese Parrot* 1927; *Shanghai Express* 1932, ink, watercolor and gouache on paper

The story is her story. Not only does she dominate the image, she is the image. No matter how you design the shapes and colors, or stage and costume her, the girl is always, must always, be the center of interest.

That's what Silke understands, and that is why he became a glamour artist. It is the girl that charms him, not the brush strokes, color, design, or composition. And it is the girl who is supposed to charm the viewer. In pin-up terms, that means appeal to your baser instincts. Turn you on.

Silke first learned this from his long-time friend Frank Frazetta who he considers one of the finest draftsmen of the twentieth century. "One of the times I stayed with the Frazettas in Sheepshead Bay, I showed Frank a drawing of a girl I'd done and his reaction surprised me. Instead of commenting on all the things I was worried about, the drawing, composition, design, etc., he just grinned with male pleasure and exclaimed, 'Yeah! She's sale!'"

That was the moment Silke realized that whatever talent and craft he had were simply a means to an end, and that end was to titillate, enchant, delight, and charm the viewer. He also understood that no pin-up artist is going to charm anyone unless he or she has been charmed. Consequently, for Silke, the first and most essential task in glamour art is picking the model.

Looking back at the history of girl art, you'll find that the artists almost always had a type they preferred, and which they turned over and over again, only changing it when popular fashion demanded it. The two who are the most collectable today are, for example, Alberto Vargas, in his foldouts of *Esquire* magazine, preferred upper-class ladies with ladylike attitudes and wearing the latest fashions. He took his models from the chorus lines of the *Ziegfeld Follies* and the night clubs of Manhattan. On the other hand, Gillette Elvgren, one of Brown & Bigelow's most popular calendar artists, used small beauties of the Midwest who traded their coyous sexuality while having their clothing partially removed by freak accidents of nature.

Today in the small, free-wheeling, open-minded world of glamour art, the artist can choose a model of any color, shape, attitude, size, ability, he or she wants; lady, hunko,



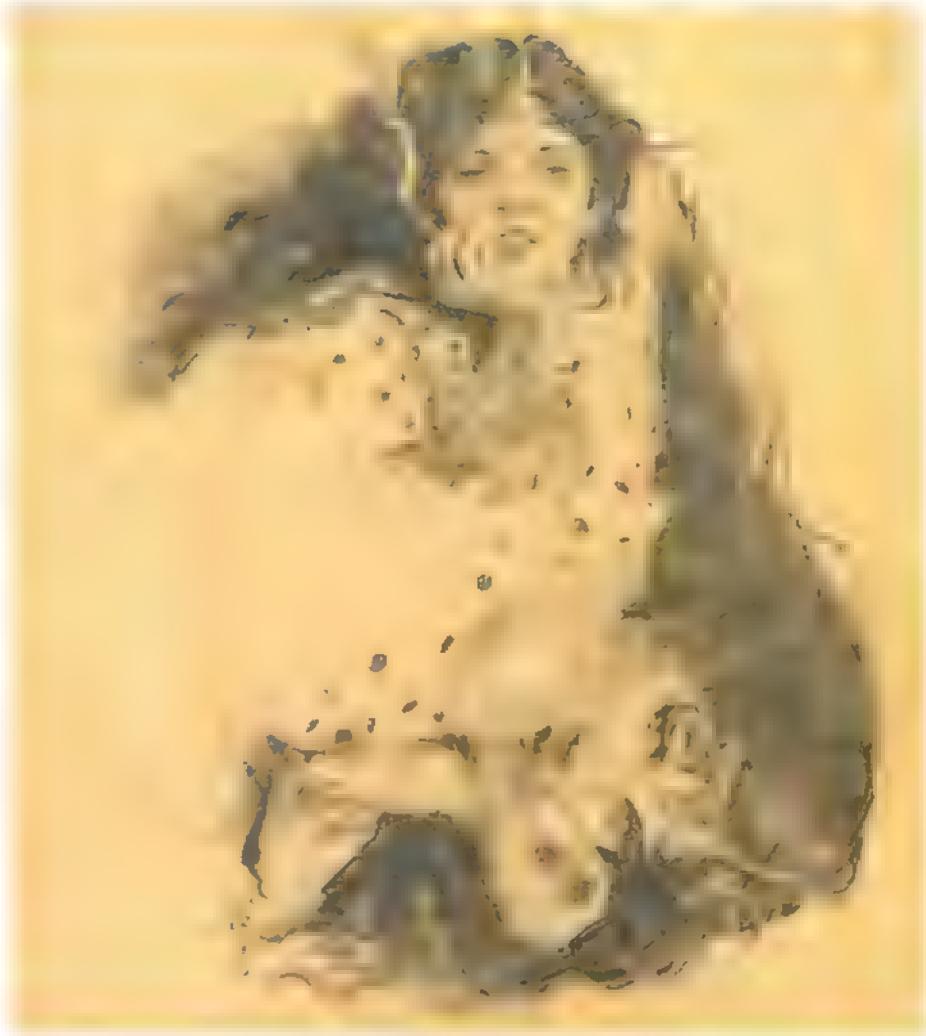
**Top:** *Miss J. C. Penney* Cardinale from various films and publicity photos in charcoal, gouache, and pastel on paper. **Bottom:** *Topless* for *Playboy* magazine. Silke posing as James Lowell Stringfellow for *Playboy*. Silke has posed for her father more than any other artist. "She's the same good actress that she can take both female and male parts in a newspaper."



queen, tramp, booty babe, saint, girl-next-door, virgin, whore, or wife. Silke loves them all, particularly the wife. But when he starts a drawing he gets very particular. He believes the qualities he looks for in a model have something to do with his preference for the rude aesthetics of the illegitimate artist. Well, maybe. But the essential traits he looks for first came to him when the director Howard Hawks (*Red River*, *Rio Bravo*, *Bringing Up Baby*, *The Big Sleep* etc.) told him a story about actress Carole Lombard.

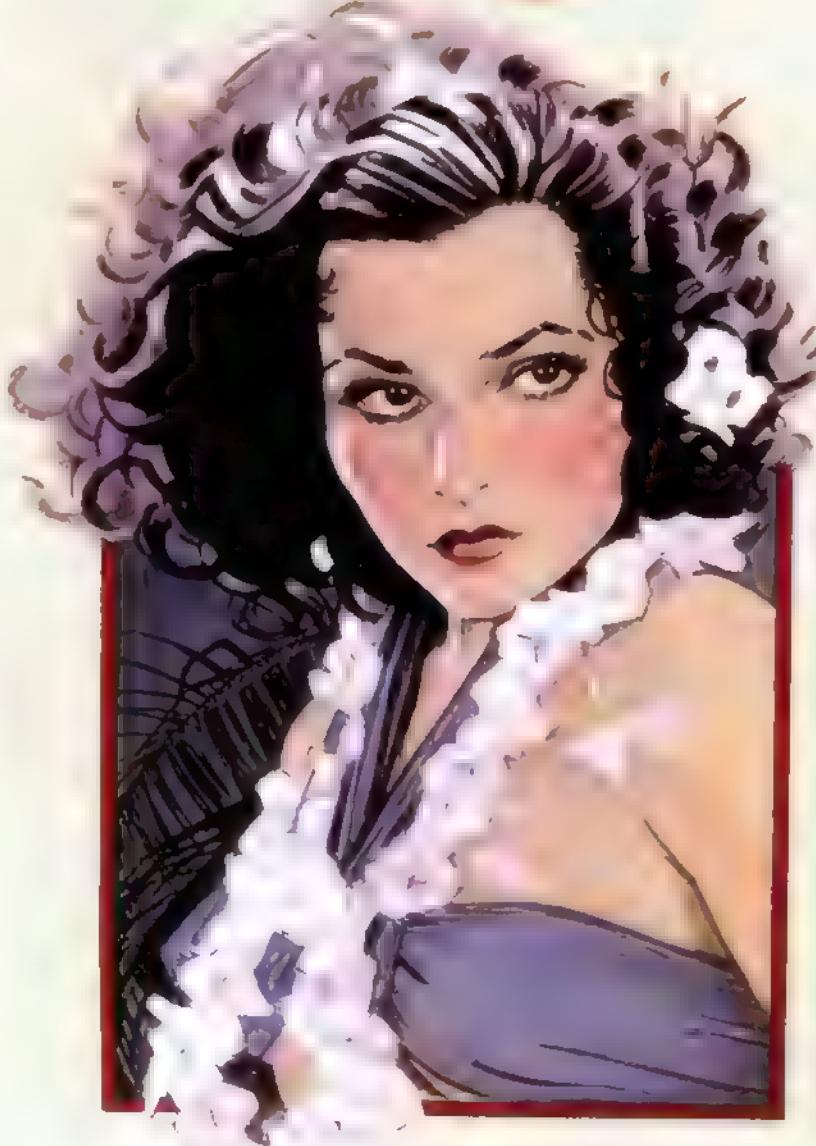
Hawks: "Lombard was one of the most attractive girls you could find. And she acted like a schoolgirl. And she was stiff; she would try and imagine a character and then act according to her imagining instead of being herself. The film was *Twentieth Century*. We were rehearsing the first day, and John Barrymore began to hold his nose and make him promise that he wouldn't say anything. At three o'clock in the afternoon, I could see him getting worried. Well, I excused him for a walk around the stage so I said, 'You've been working hard on the scene.' She said, 'I'm glad it shows.' And I said, 'Yes, you know every word of it. How much do you get paid for the picture?' She said, 'I say, that's pretty good. What do you pay for?' She said, 'Well, acting.' She said, 'Well, what if I would tell you that you earned all your money, and you have to act anymore?' She just stared at me, and I said, 'What would you do if a man said such a thing to you?' She said, 'I kick him right in the balls.' And I said, 'Well, Barrymore said that to you. Why don't you kick him? What would you say if he said such a thing to you?' And he said, 'I say, you know, with one instant gesture, I said, 'Well, I'll tell you when he said such and such. Now you're going back in and you're stiff, and you kick him, and you don't think long but comes to your mind to act and quit acting. If you don't mind, I'll tell you this afternoon.' She said, 'All right.' She became a star after that. And she used to send me a wire and she started a picture saying, 'I'm kicking him right in the balls.' "

It is the emotional honesty that Silke looks for in a model—and it is he who encourages the director to look for the personality of the model in the drawing—and that I hope to capture in my drawings. The model's character as well as her physical beauty. Her vitality, joy, anger



Top: charcoal on paper; and two charcoal on paper. Top: charcoal pencil on paper; and two charcoal on colored paper. For more on Silke, see page 26.

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Balges Del Rio in, clockwise from top left: *Revenge* (1924-25); *The Bad One* (1930); and *Bird in Paradise* (1928), watercolor and gouache on paper. Private Collection



And her attitude, defiant, vulnerable, coy, clever, dangerous."

The habits he formed during years of writing motion pictures, novels, and comic books also determine his choices. In short, he picks a model as if he were casting an adventure story. He wants the viewer to ask, "Who is she? What's about to happen to her? Will she survive?"

I am certain that the deep-seated reason behind this preference comes from the influence of Milton Caniff's characters, the Dragon Lady and Burma. They initiated Silke's unsuspecting imagination into the luring delights of dangerous ladies in tropical climes. Cartoonist Jules Feiffer said it best when he pointed out that Caniff drew women, not girls, and that fact undoubtedly made them the preeminent attraction of Silke's virgin youth. As Feiffer noted, "...even the eleven-year-old suspected—that a man—say, a very young man—could spend the night and that Burma would please him beyond his wildest dreams and that the Dragon Lady would please herself."

Silke puts it another way. "Vulnerable chicks are swell, but there's something about a full-grown woman that gets to me. It's all that experience and loss of innocence. All the heat, fire, and smoke in her eyes. And the danger. You just know that somebody's gonna get hurt and, hopefully, it'll be you."

That point of view again shows Kipling's effect on the young Silke, and this time I know precisely where it originated, a stanza from Kipling's poem, "The Ladies":

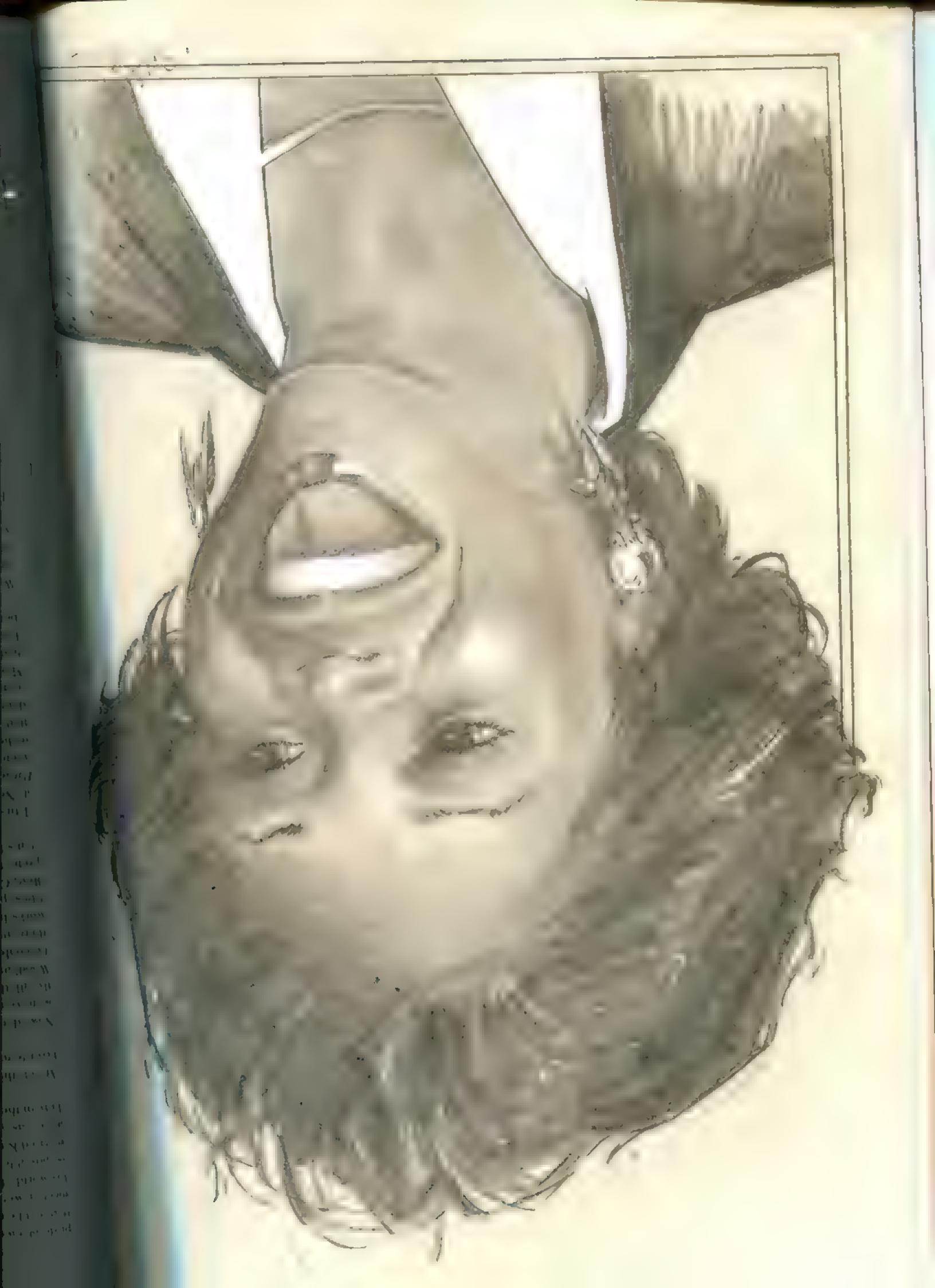
Then we was shifted to Neemuch  
(Or I might ha' been keepin' 'er now),  
An' I took with a shiny she-devil.  
The wife of a nigger at Mhow.  
Taught me the gipsy-folks' bole,  
Kind o' volcano she were,  
For she knifed me one night 'cause I  
wished she was white,  
And I learned about women from 'er!

Today, we condemn the poet for using the "n" word, but at the same time we have to recognize that, long before the rest of the white world, Kipling understood his own prejudice as well as the justified anger of the black woman.

"Ever since high school, when I first read that poem, I daydreamed about meeting and knowing a beauty with that kind of anger,



Top: Madonna, pencil and white chalk on newsprint. This drawing changed Silke's concept of female glamour, see text. Bottom: Clara, pencil on newsprint.



pride of race, and courage." Silke may say that, but he never actually believed he would meet a woman like that. Nevertheless, in his world of chance and adventure anything is possible, and on October 7, 2000, he married Kurtesa—a woman whose spirit and anger, as you'll see, is very much like the lady in the poem.

All of this chitchat brings me to Silke's favorite model, Claudia Cardinale.

Now, don't let your imaginations run away with you. This gorgeous actress does not fly all the way from Rome to pose in his Woodland Hills studio. If she did, I'm sure he couldn't handle it. But she's never been here and is not on her way, so he's safe. He works from photographs of her and from her movies, particularly *Once Upon A Time In The West*, *Cleopatra*, and *The Leopard*. It's a tad pretentious of him to call her his model, but that's how he sees it.

"I first drew Claudia when casting the part of Nellie in my comic book, *Rascals In Paradise*. Nellie is a living replica of an ancient savage, Phoenician priestess. She's a hot, bloodthirsty, an instinctive animal who is totally alive and desirable and dangerous. I initially tried to use other actresses for the part, Dolores Del Rio, Anna May Wong, Joan Crawford (because Camille was used up as the model for the Dragon Girl). But Claudia was the only one I could draw as a savage animal."

After he finished *Rascals*, he just kept drawing her and is still at it because, as he explains, "for Silke she makes hungry the most she satisfies."

His drawing of Brigitte Bardot as Doreen, the "Spicy" Spender in *Rascals*, had a different flavor. Spicy, like Bardot, is enigmatic in vision and completely indifferent to men, both clothed and nude. She's like the male characters, each one drawn from her own male vision of whom she is. As Silke points out, "None of the Spicy girls, more than I get to know, know I draw. Men never get to know I get to the heart of the story. It's not going to happen, so it's important to work from the outside in that way you have a chance of success. The right model will not only inspire you, but also inform and make you real."

Bettie Page first taught Silke that lesson back in the fifties. As he pointed out in his book, *Bettie Page, Queen of Hearts*, he drew her a lot back then when he was studying the female anatomy because Bettie's anatomy was so well defined. But in drawing her over and over, he eventually came to see that her main attraction was her attitude, her animated joy, her personality and character. "They were as important, actually more important, than her physical perfection."

In 1988, Madonna also woke him up. His sketch of her included in this book (page 29) is not one of his best, nor is it a very good likeness of the singer. Nevertheless, it is important to him because a lot of his assumptions about female beauty, glamour, and style changed as he did it.

"I was trained as an artist to let the subject control not only the emotion with which I approach it, but the rhythm of my pencil stroke, and its force, whether timid, strong, or otherwise, thus allowing my imagination and senses to enter my subject's world. That is why I work in silence rather than with music, and why it is so difficult to draw in public at conventions. As a consequence, when drawing Madonna I found there was no flow to her hair; it was more like drawing spikes or nails. The same feeling carried into the stabbing strokes when I drew in the stink-eye blacks of her eye sockets, and the jagged edge of the zipper. Her mole became emphasized, and I boldly drew in her Adam's apple. I didn't hint at it, but drew the whole damn thing. Madonna, no doubt, was aware of this emphasis when designing her makeup, hair, and wardrobe, and there are millions of teenage girls that also, obviously, understand it as they imitate her religiously. But it was all brand new to me. And it was right."

For those of you unaware of the short history of the pin-up trade, I must point out that there are simply no Adam's apples in girl art. None. Not in Kirchner, Vargas, Armstrong, Petty, Bolles, Elvgren, etc. But there are now.

Silke's point is simply this, whether you're a genius like Shakespeare creating a classic femme fatale such as Cleopatra, or a starving freelance cartoonist drawing a hot tomato for the cover of an air freshener, you learn from the model, not only of the new styles in fashion and social behavior, but of the nature of the female.

Unfortunately for Silke, the lessons are sometimes a bit more blunt than those Madonna taught him. "When I made the drawing of my wife Kurtesa, (page 30), I confronted a problem of considerable dimensions. At that time, I only had about

ten or twelve hours' experience drawing black women, and over fifty years' experience drawing white women. That meant that I was an amateur again as there are distinctly different problems, despite the politically correct police who don't want you to mention it, between rendering a white and black woman; the value range is closer, the hair texture is different, and the structure of the lips, nose, and body are, in general, different, to say nothing of the particular differences of the individual. Then there was the emotional problem: I was courting her at the time.

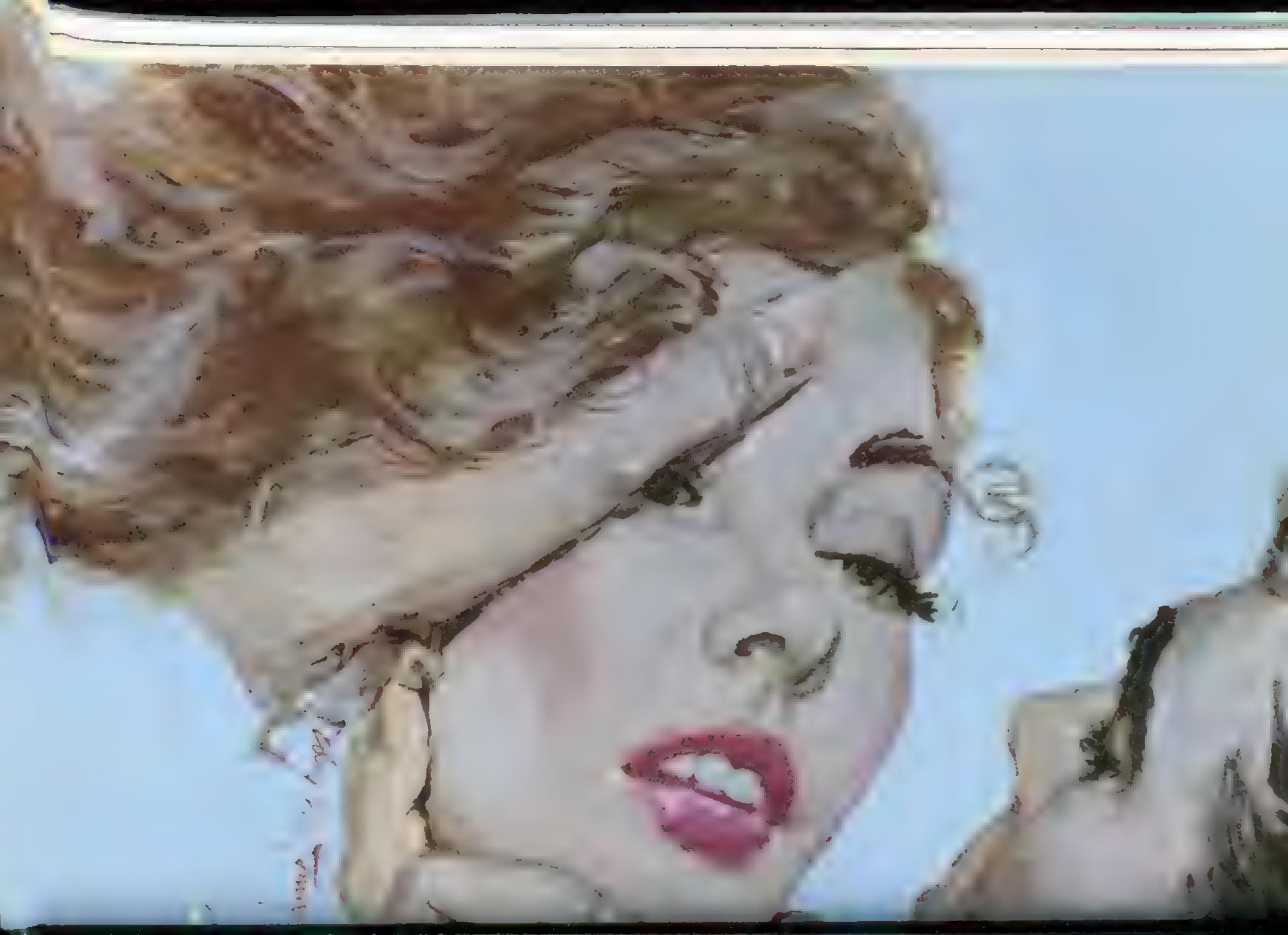
"In short, my concentration and focus were intense as I did the drawing. What I was shooting for was her animation and vitality, and I think I got it. I was afraid to paint the drawing, however, and still am, as my pencil is a lot more skilled than my brush."

His wife Kurtesa, to Silke's delight, was not offended by the drawing; she even liked it a little. So, filled with the euphoria of his minor success, Silke proceeded in his mindless, academic manner to explain to her how, while she was beautiful, she was not a conventional glamour girl. To his shock and surprise, her reply was a sudden, sharp blow upside his head.

And, as Kipling would say, he learned about women from her.



Detail of a drawing of a woman's face and upper body, done with pencil and charcoal on newsprint. (page 30) Drawing on a panel in the book *Pin-Ups* (1996) in the French and gouache on colored paper.



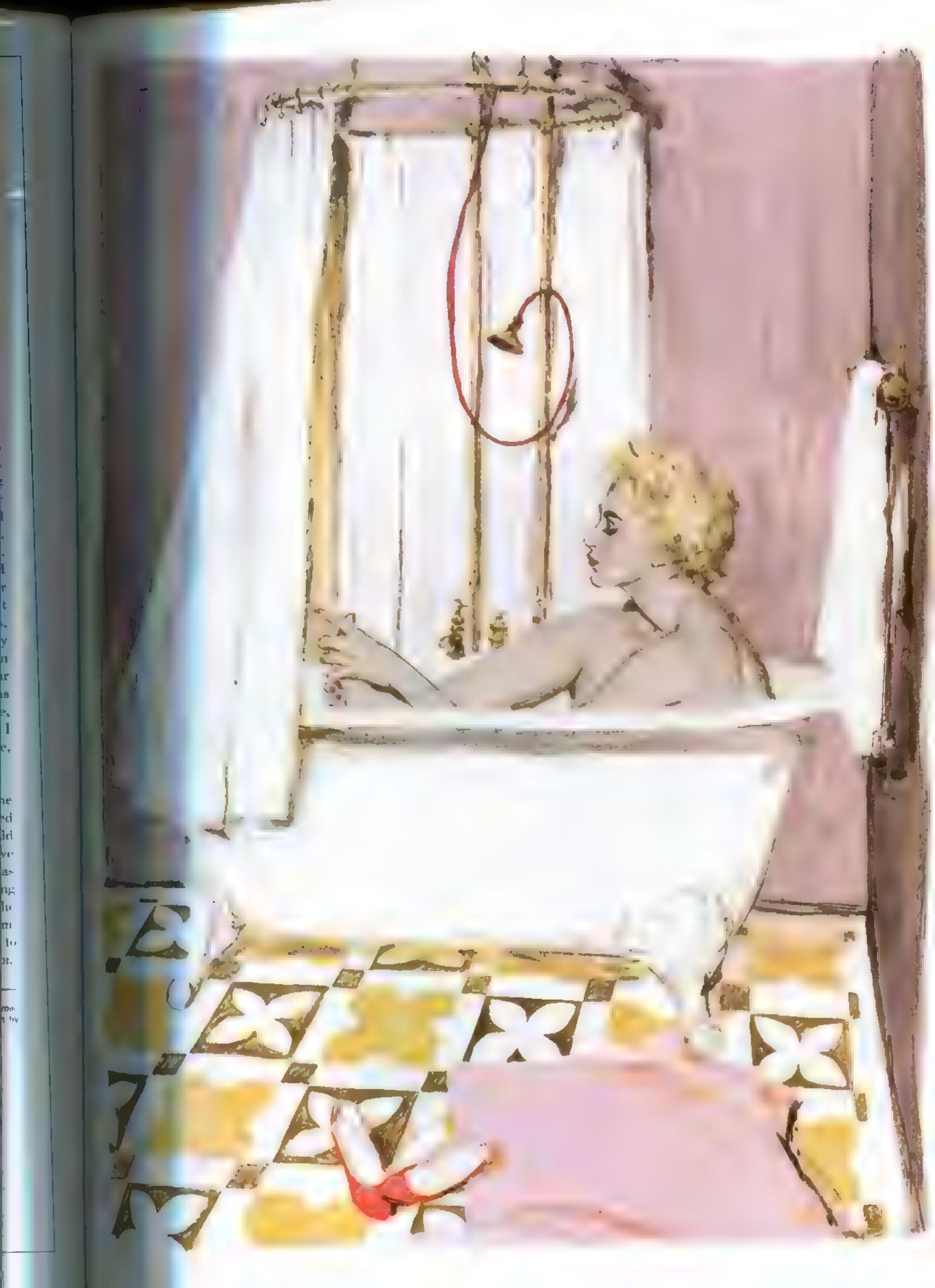


this kind of boyish stupidity, waited patiently until he found his wits and told her where Mc Kemp's office was. Jimmie Boy watched her move off, and then covertly followed her as she crossed the empty theater, passed through the main lobby, and climbed the staircase to the balcony lobby where the producer's office was located. Slowly ascending the staircase, he stopped short of the landing with his eyes at the level of the balcony floor so he could study her as she spoke to the secretary, then sat down and waited. Silke recalls, "It was like looking at an object of art, and it absolutely confounded me."

His confusion did not come from meeting a celebrity. Silke was used to that. He had met all the superstars mentioned above, as well as Red Skelton, Dinah Shore, Rose Stevens, and Errol Flynn, and had spent an entire afternoon racing around Hollywood trying to find Marilyn Monroe a chicken salad sandwich. He'd also met the most beautiful dancing girls in Hollywood, Larri Thomas, Julie Newmar, Peggy Gordon, June Mahoney, and his reaction to them is what you might expect, a very active, if awkward, sexual attraction. But Hedy Lamarr totally unnerved him. "I had no sexual response to her whatsoever. Her aesthetic beauty awed and consumed me. It simply overwhelmed my senses and emotions, and I couldn't stop looking at her. The only other times I've reacted like that were on viewing Michelangelo's *Pieta* and Edgar Degas's *Dancers In the Wings*. But this was the first time I'd been moved to that degree, and I was determined to study her until I discovered just how she, or Mother Nature, had managed to make her so beautiful."

Hedy Lamarr, of course, disappeared into the producer's office before her magic revealed itself to our young clown. Now you would think if he was that impressed, that he'd have considered going into the movie business, as a costume designer or art director, something that he actually would do ten years in the future, but that never occurred to him. Instead, it pushed him into the decision to become a slick women's magazine illustrator.

Left: Illustration by Coby Whitmore for *The Ladies Home Journal*. Copyright 1953 *The Ladies Home Journal*. Opposite: Illustration by Coby Whitmore for *Cosmopolitan* in the late 1950s.







"I had a sudden hunger to draw beautiful women and the only artist I knew of that painted movie stars at that time was Jon Whitcomb. Every month *Cosmopolitan* featured a drawing by Whitcomb of a female star. I'd also done some movie star covers for the magazine, one featuring Bogart and Bacall and another with Mylene Demongeot. And when Whitcomb wasn't painting a movie star, he was working with the most beautiful models in New York. All those artists were. And you could tell from their work that they were having one hell of a good time. In those magazines, the artist is editor, producer, costume designer, prop master, set decorator, and casting director as well as the artist. I figured it must be an adult way of playing with paper dolls or, better yet, making your own paper dolls."

This was Silke's first conscious attempt at becoming a girl artist. But the field he picked was way too respectable for someone with his love and love of the lowdown, profane and nonmainstream. "There were no nudes to

speak of in the women's magazine, no sight of any lingerie, not even an exposed bra strap. And the stories were banal, without a hint of poverty, hard times, filth, horror, violence, or pain. And no sex. None." As Jon Whitcomb pointed out, in America, love in the women's publications stopped at the courtship.

Silke diligently set to work trying to draw stylish people, clothes, furnishings, cars, and restaurants. To keep up with the latest styles in shoes, jewelry, dresses, hairstyles, and lipsticks, he built a scrap file following the organizational chart in Al Parker's course in the Famous Artists Advanced Program. But eventually, his passion waned. "All the characters in those stories were living the American Good Life, and there wasn't a single short girl in the crowd, let alone a brown-skinned lovely. There was nothing commonplace whatsoever in the stories or artwork, except for the mandatory broken heart."

What Silke eventually found out was this: the bedrooms, restaurants, cars, and women

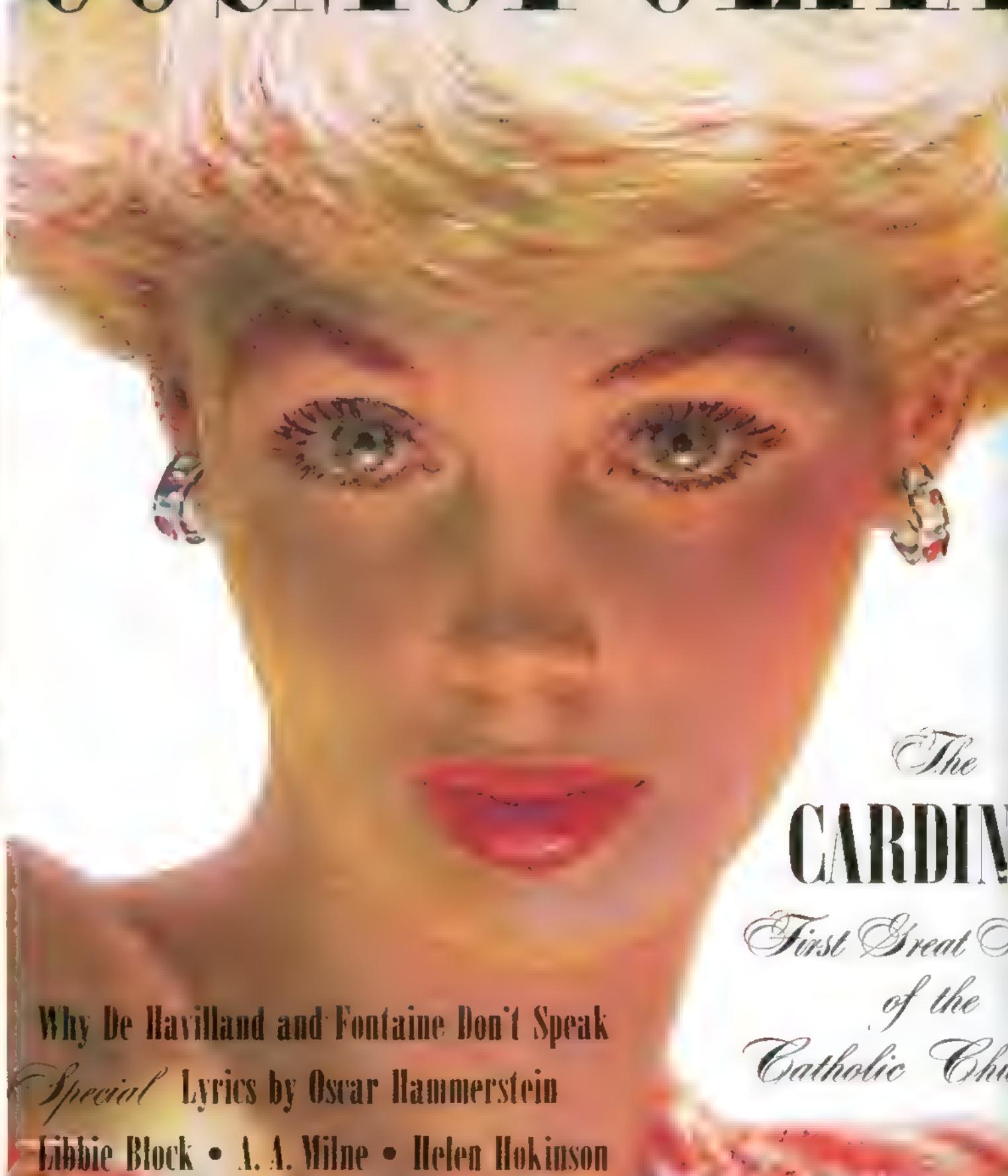
the women's illustrators put on paper were identical to the bedrooms they lived in, the restaurants they ate in, the cars they drove, and the women they romanced. The artists represented on these pages had an authentic love for and understanding of their subject matter, and that is what makes their work so attractive and convincing. Silke, on the other hand, knew nothing of that world, and had no real interest in becoming part of it. He was totally out of his element.

"I still respect and admire the work of these artists, but I couldn't compete with them. Art has to be honest and sincere to be any good. And artists have to be honest and sincere in order to compete and keep at it year after year, and the women's magazines were just way too polite and sanitized for me."

Too legitimate.

Opposite: Illustration by John LaGatta for *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1938. Above: Illustration by Al Parker for *Hollywood Daughter* by Barbara Dickenson, published by *Cosmopolitan* in the late 1950s.

# COSMOPOLITAN



Why De Havilland and Fontaine Don't Speak  
*Special* Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein

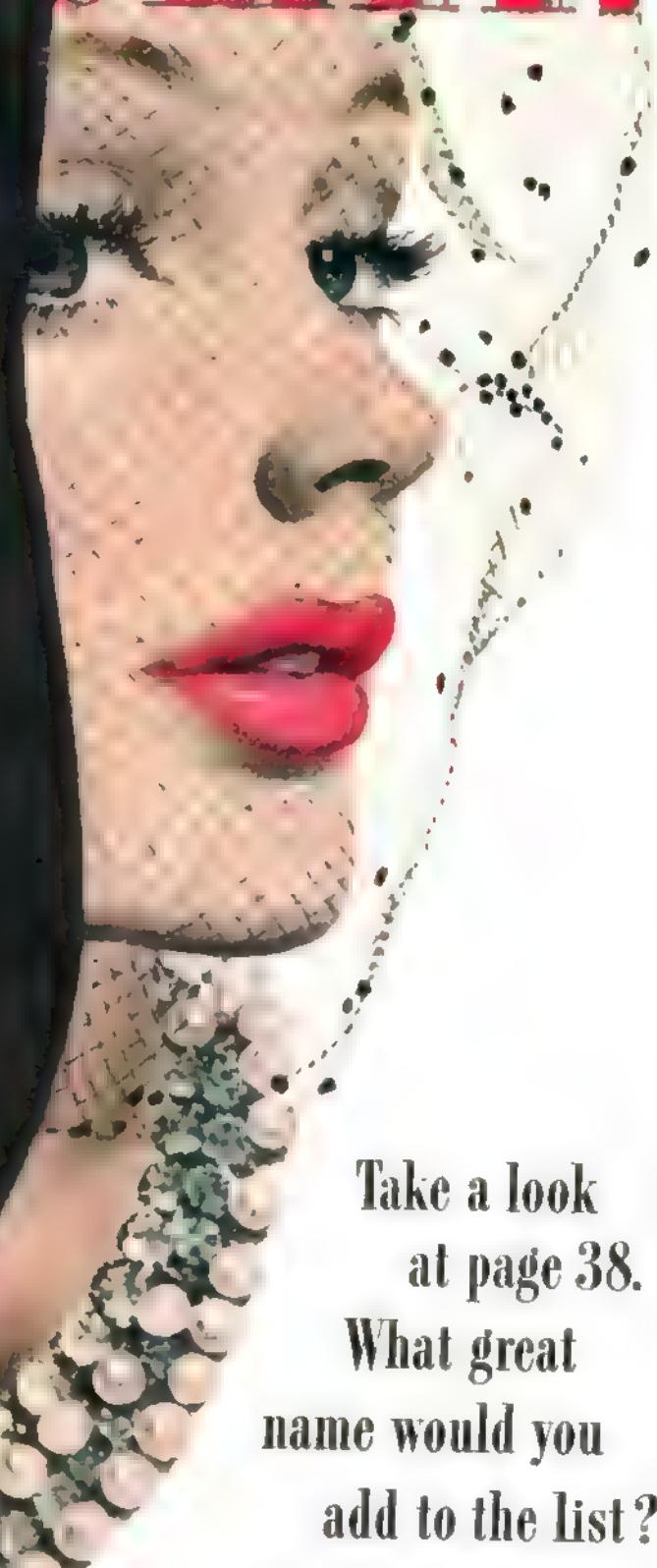
Libbie Block • A. A. Milne • Helen Hokinson

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# COSMOPOLITAN



Take a look  
at page 38.  
What great  
name would you  
add to the list?

Jon Whitcomb





## GODDESSES

*"You can't imagine how happy it makes a man to see a woman like you—just to look at her."*  
—Cheyenne to Jill in *Once Upon A Time In the West* (1968)

All right, now we're going to jump ahead to the 1990s and explore why Silke made the decision, even though by accident, to become a girly artist. To give you a hint, he's quoted on this chapter's title.

Now if this were a play instead of a movie, the second act would start about here and our adventurous hero would have to confront his inner problem, the tension between his religious childhood and his current profession. Pin-up art is only sexual. That's a given. Silke is determined to do his best to create pin-up art. That's a given. But to accommodate his background, he needs to justify it, needs a reason to believe it has some value, some importance. Preferably, a religious reason. Now as strange as it may seem, this guy thinks he has one. So, here goes.

In the beginning was desire, and it was woman.

Men have known this truth for only about ten to twelve thousand years. Women, of course, have always known it. But when the Christian Church took over the Western world about sixteen hundred years ago, it rewrote the premise: "In the beginning was desire, it was woman, and it was bad." The holy fathers, in liturgical edicts, divine inspiration, and Sunday school class, made it clear that women were not interested in sex, and if they were, they were evil Satan's playmates.

Does that mean if you're drawing pin-ups, you're doing the devil's work? "You bet!" says Silke. "That's how a lot of folks see it."

He's right. That's because the link between women and desire is at the core of glamour art, and the message is clear. Whether the art is done beautifully by George Petty and Alberto Vargas, or badly as it was on the covers of *Titter*, *Wink*, and *Beauty Parade*, whether the girls portrayed are luminescent goddesses, cute little bubbleheads, or floozies, whether they smile invitingly or pretend not to notice you are eyeballing them, whether they are hot or innocent, tramp or fashion plate, the paper pretties offer themselves directly to you, letting you know that they crave a man brave enough to take them, and that they are helpless to resist. All yours.

The centerfold, calendar, and cover girls, of course, can't help themselves. They are made of paper. That means that while their



poses and expressions make it clear they are total pushovers, they are at the same time totally unavailable. Does that mean girl art is simply a game of tease, or is there possibly something more profound and provoking at work than easy sex? Well, the way I figure it, for most of us easy sex is just fine. But not for Silke. He's gotta find something profound in it, so he dug into history until he satisfied himself that there is sufficient reason to believe that the church had blown it, and that there are primal, necessary reasons not only for living and breathing temptresses, but for bedtime babies and bare naked ladies made of paper. The following, in brief, is how he sorted this out.

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, about 10,000 to 20,000 B.C., long before the first "Thou shall not . . ." was written, women ruled the Mediterranean world. Back then, men couldn't figure out why their favorite cow or girlfriend got pregnant, why it rained some days and not others, why the sun came up in the morning and the moon at night, or why fire, lightning, and the Great Cave Bear struck down one man and not another. The women, always ready to grasp an opportunity, quickly filled this void in the male intellect, claiming it was the power of the all-seeing Earth Mother, the great pooh-bah of everything, the holy of holies who decided who should live and who should die, and that the priestesses of the Goddess were the only ones who could intercede with the Great Mother on man's behalf.

This scared the bananas out of the men, even made the Larry Flynts and Ralph Laurens of that time tremble. They had no idea how

women became pregnant and bore children, and therefore considered them magic. Consequently, for the next twenty thousand years or so men bowed down in abject obedience to the female deity.

To make it easy on the men, the lady priests divided the Great Goddess into three parts, Virgin, Nymph, and Mother. The men, of course, couldn't figure out why there should be any virgins, and they were naturally afraid of their mothers. But the Nymph part they caught onto real quick.

The Nymph was the provocateur of life, the instigator, the sacred fire that created life and made their livers quiver, and they were more than eager to worship at her gate of life. But there was a problem. If you fooled around with a Nymph, there was a damn good chance you'd end up with a Mother. But if you denied yourself the Nymphs, then they suddenly became even more desirable. And if you still kept your distance, their magic became irresistible, and you went to them babbling mindless sentiments and promises in the hope of worshiping between their sacred thighs. So, that totally available and totally unavailable thing that you find in pin-up art has been at work a long, long time.

When the men took over Western civilization, and imposed their own ideas of how things should work, they still retained the Nymph, corraling all the attributes of the Earth Mother in one deity, and calling her Asherat, Ishtar, Aphrodite, Venus, and a smorgasbord of other titles so that she is often referred to as The Goddess of a Thousand Names. Then, as I pointed out earlier, when the Christians

took over, they took the Virgin and Mother into their theology, cramming the pair into one deity called the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and tried to throw the Nymph out. But the little vixen wasn't about to be so easily dismissed.

Looking around at the cultures of the Dark and Middle Ages, the Nymph quickly found out that she was more than welcome on the wicked, wicked stage. First she traveled with the wayfaring entertainers, the jugglers, buffoons, dancers, and fools who traveled from castle to castle singing for their supper. Then, while the Church was busy developing a theater from which women were excluded, and the aristocrats of the High Renaissance still clung to recreating classic Greek and Roman plays in which the female roles were played by young men, the Nymph moved through the streets and market places to become an integral part of the first organized troupe of traveling players, the commedia dell'arte.

The Church was quick to denounce them. "The low women who ordinarily act," declared a Jesuit priest in 1589, "are beautiful, lewd, and have bartered their virtue, and with gestures and movements of the whole body, and with voices bland and suave, with beautiful costumes, like sirens, they charm and transform men into beasts and lure them the more easily to destruction as they themselves are the more wicked and lost to every sense of virtue."

Above: Earl Carroll Varieties, figure based on Yvonne Menard and facade based on Maureen O'Sullivan. Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper. Private Collection. Opposite: Ziegfeld Follies. Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper. Private Collection.



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As late as 1862, critics were still at it. Robert Baldnick, in *The Concord Journal*, declared that the theater "...is a center of debauchery...like a stock exchange dealing in women's nights."

But despite the clergy's protests, the Nymph had finally found her place in male society, and she was not about to give it up.

On stage, the Eternal Nymph took many parts, her favorite being the clown Columbine, a lovely, light-minded, or strong-minded, sex object possessing an incarnate sensuality, a destructive or creative life force that is beyond moral or rational control. In play after play, she would seduce the clown Pierot, a naive and moonstruck victim of the world, a world that remorselessly frustrates all his desires. Then, in the following scene, she would add to his frustrations by cheating on him with the clown Harlequin, a brutal, cynical trickster with acrobatic skills whose behavior bordered on the criminal, and who was definitely and persistently obscene.

In another play, she would charm the clown posing as Doctor or Professor, both pretentious pedagoges, then knock him off his pompos pedestal, by marrying the clown (another a miserly, foolish, credulous lovable who would inevitably become the perfect model of a husband).

The plots of the plays performed by the *commedia dell'arte* were all put in motion because of the romantic difficulties of a pair of lovers, a lovely, sweet, young beauty and a handsome young hero. The lovers, known as the *Graciosa*, were straight characters just to move the script and carried the plot forward. But the plot was secondary to the antics of the other characters, the clowns whose performances were improvised, the unmasking and satirizing the *de magistrates* of the town where they were performing.

As the plays got better and the role of the young hero became stronger, the Nymph also took her part. All of the clowns, of course, as stylized versions of characters you could find in every village and town in the world, from the time of the Greeks down to today.

The enormous success of the *commedia dell'arte* eventually led to the construction of their own theaters in Rome, Paris, London, Berlin, and elsewhere, where they competed with the legitimate theater. In time the clowns eventually transformed themselves and carried their madcap semi-*farce* theatrical style into the traveling circuses, vaudeville troupes, and burlesque shows. Then they merged with the players performing in musical comedies, and may have been the featured stars of the great Broadway revues, *The Ziegfeld Follies*, *The George White Scandals*, and *The Earl Carroll Vanities*. Their greatest opportunity, of course, came with the advent of motion pictures where they are still at play.

If you find it difficult to identify these characters or their spirit today, let me point out two of the most famous films of the last century were made in the *commedia dell'arte* style. Both left out the *Graciosa* characters and gave the job of carrying the plot to the principal characters, Harlequin, Pierrot, and Columbine.

One is the classic French film, *Children of Paradise*, written by Jacques Prévert and directed by Marcel Carné in 1945. It tells the story of a mime (Pierrot) who loves a beautiful, beguiling, enigmatic entertainer (Columbine). She, in turn, loves him, another actor, a snobbish aristocrat, and a criminal (Harlequin).



Opposite: Michelle Bauer, posed in 1964 for an early version of *Rascals In Paradise* titled "Spicy and the Starbandits," and painted in 2003. Ink, watercolor and gouache on paper. Above: *Tropic Beauty*, gouache on cardboard. Private Collection.





The other is *Some Like It Hot* written by IAL Diamond and Billy Wilder, and directed by Wilder in 1959. It tells the story of two musicians who dress up like women and join a girl band in order to hide from a bunch of bootlegging gangsters chasing them. The band includes a singer, Sugar Kowalczyk, played by Marilyn Monroe in the Columbine role. Tony Curtis plays Joe/Josephine in the seducer/trickster Harlequin role, and Jack Lemmon plays Jerry/Daphne in the Pierot role, a victim of life put upon by the gangsters, his best friend, and by his own naiveté about his bisexual nature.

For better or worse, all of the searching and reasoning convinced Silke that pin-up art is simply a way of providing another stage for the Eternal Nymph, and that the way to present her is in the trashy, ribald, colorful, illegitimate style of the commedia dell'arte

In short, Silke found in this ancient, undocumented, pagan, female religion a possible justification for what he does. But I don't buy it, not yet. Justification, redemption, and profound are still words that do not, no matter how good Silke is at his historical hocus-pocus, mix well with bimbo, sugar baby, and ding-dong girl.

But his claim that pin-up art is best served by the style of the commedia dell'arte makes a whole lot of sense, as you'll see in the next chapter.

Opposite: Betty Boop, ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper. Private Collection. Above: About Last Night, ink, watercolor and gouache on paper. Private Collection

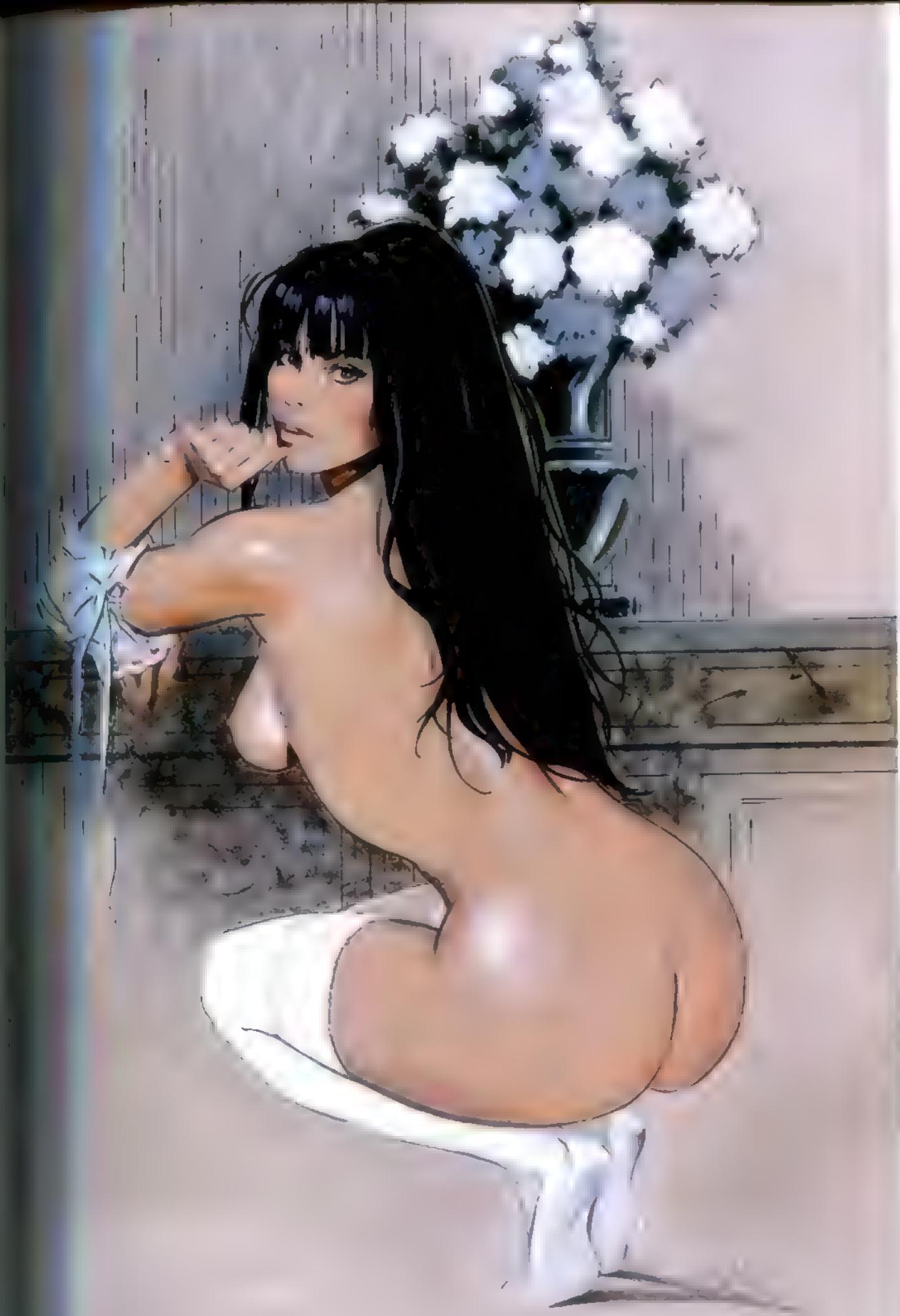


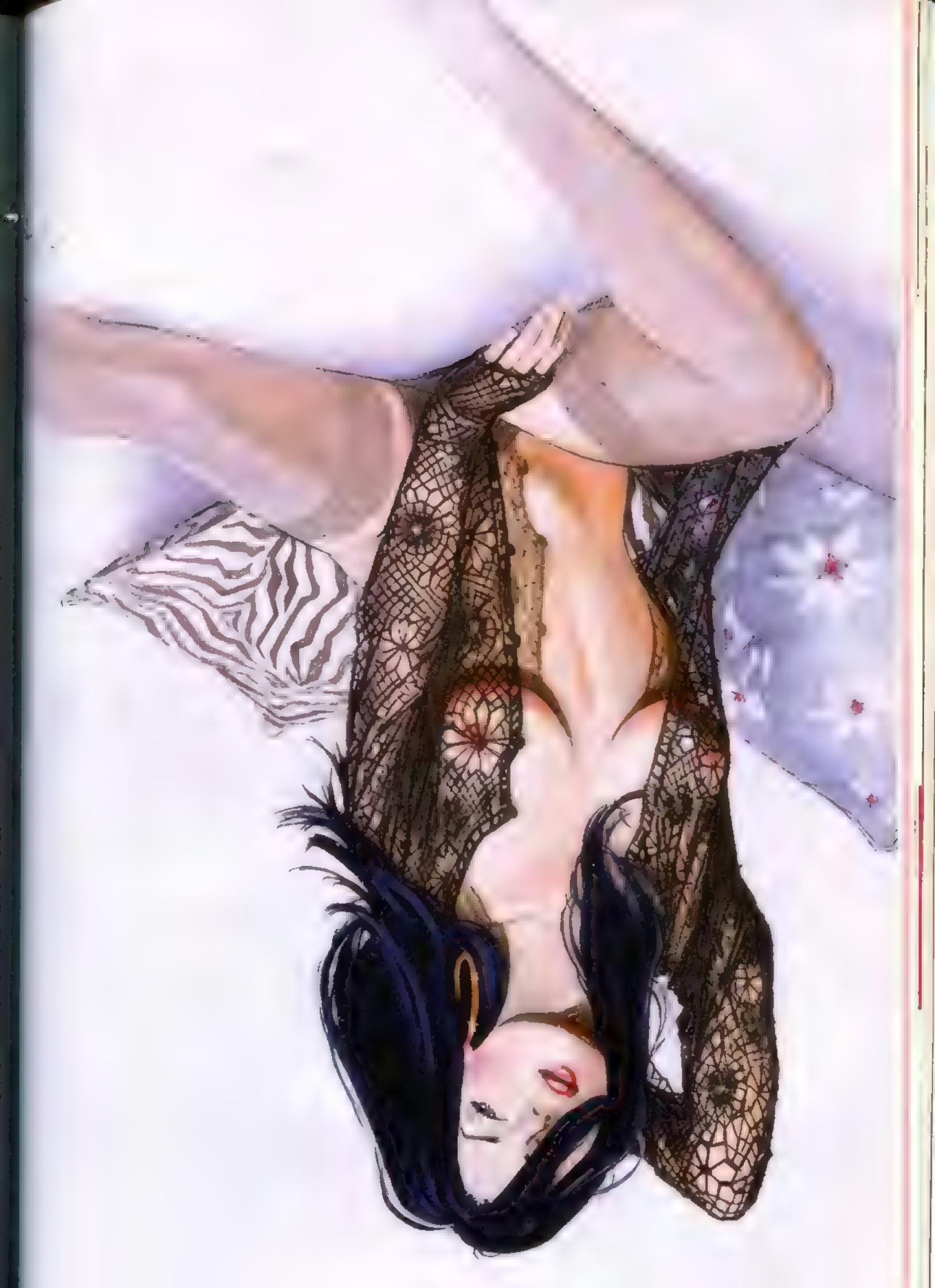


Left: *Miss Shandor*, pencil and gouache on colored paper  
Top: *Nude Girl*, pencil and gouache on colored paper  
Bottom: *Self-Portrait*



Above: Leahla Casta, pencil and gouache on colored paper. Private Collection. Opposite: Lisa Marie Scott, gouache on colored paper. Private Collection.







*Opposite* **Marie Scott**, gouache on colored paper **Above:** Gene Tierney  
4: Shanghai Gesture 94½ in. x 72 in. watercolor and gouache on paper

# FILM FUN

JUNE 20¢



TIME  
TO STAR  
GAZING



## BEDTIME BABIES

*But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,  
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They are!*  
—Rudyard Kipling / "When Earth's Last Picture Is Painted" (1892)

Who Silke conceived *Rascals In Paradise*, he envisioned himself using Claudia Cardinale's laughter and Bogie's bandit's smile over and over again. Who'd a' thunk it? "When I actually did break Claudia ended up an angry savage and I soon think I got more than two smiles out of Bogie."

Now if his ladies in this book, you'll also see that there are very few smiles and only one or two laughs. It's not that Silke can't make a laughing face; it's something else.

"There are hundreds, thousands of smiling, laughing beauties in my photo file, but when I go through them to find someone to draw I end up picking a very serious, even stern face with a lot of attitude. The same happens when a model poses for me;

she'll laugh and smile most of the time she's here, but what ends up on film is a long ways from comedy."

This is why Silke envies the artists represented on these pages, Enoch Bolles, George Petty, and Rolf Armstrong.

"The spirit that these three artists put on paper is the same spirit the clowns of the commedia dell'arte put on stage. The spirit of the illegitimate theater that recognizes that life is fundamentally chaotic; a zany, ribald, beautiful dream that will somehow turn out well. That's the spirit I would most like to evoke, and the one that eludes me."

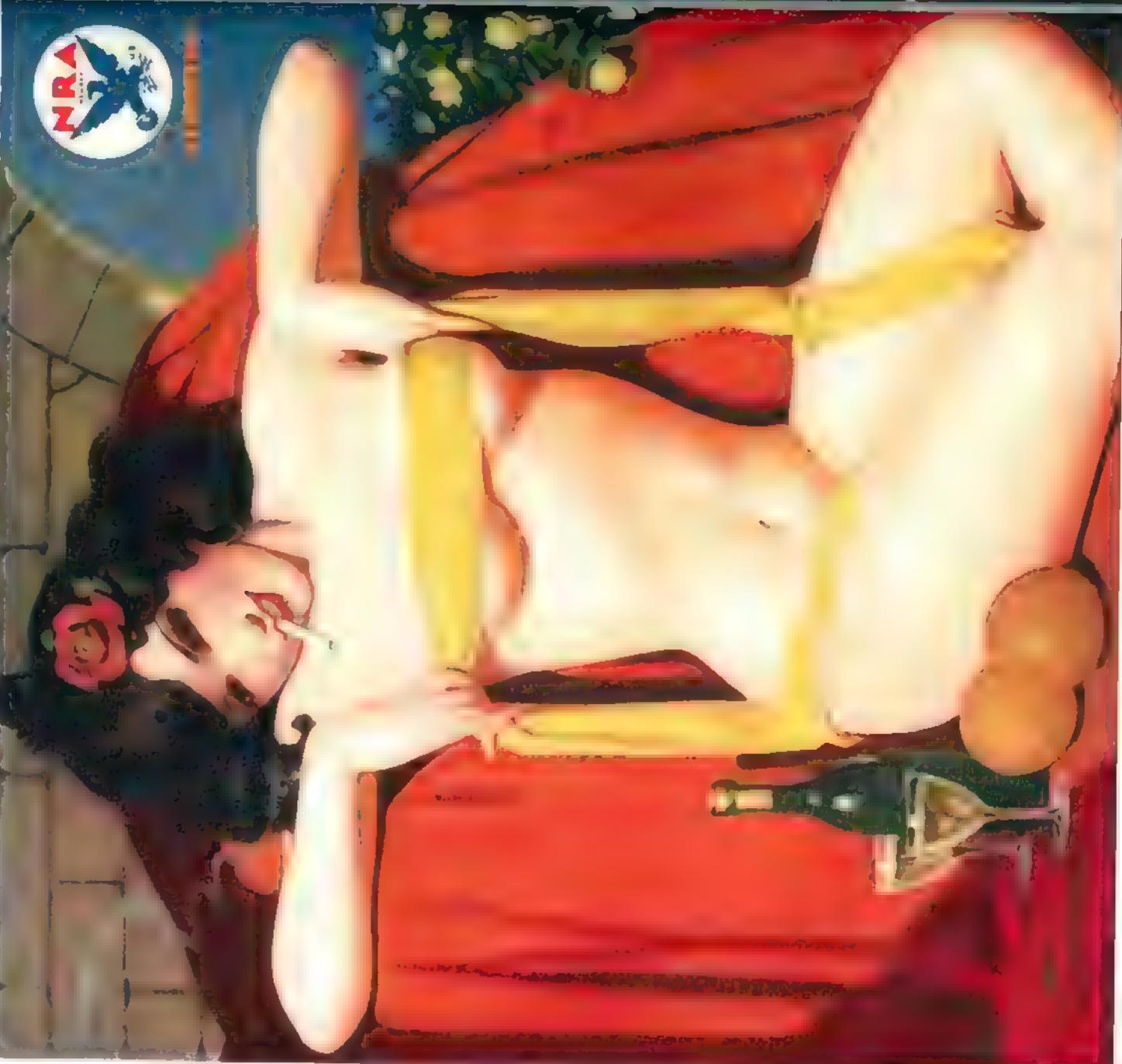
The pictures these three men created, from around 1915 to 1950, evoke a bold, energetic joy. Their women are strong, vivid,

full of life, and openly embrace the commonplace, popular, and commercial. They are trashy and profane. They have absolutely no pretensions, except for a healthy confidence in their own beauty, and they and the world they inhabit seem absolutely genuine.

"I love them because they bring fun into my life, and fulfill a personal criteria for art. Their pictures have a quality of redemption that I crave: the girls they paint have a joyous spirit that compels imitation."

Silke knows that they're dream girls with impossibly perfect bodies and faces, and that the pictures celebrate their surface beauty, celebrate all that is superficial: flesh, color, action, hair styles, slinky clothes, rhinestones, bubble beads, costumes, and cosmetics. But from Silke's point of view,

# BE A HUNDRED LOVES BY EVATANGUAY



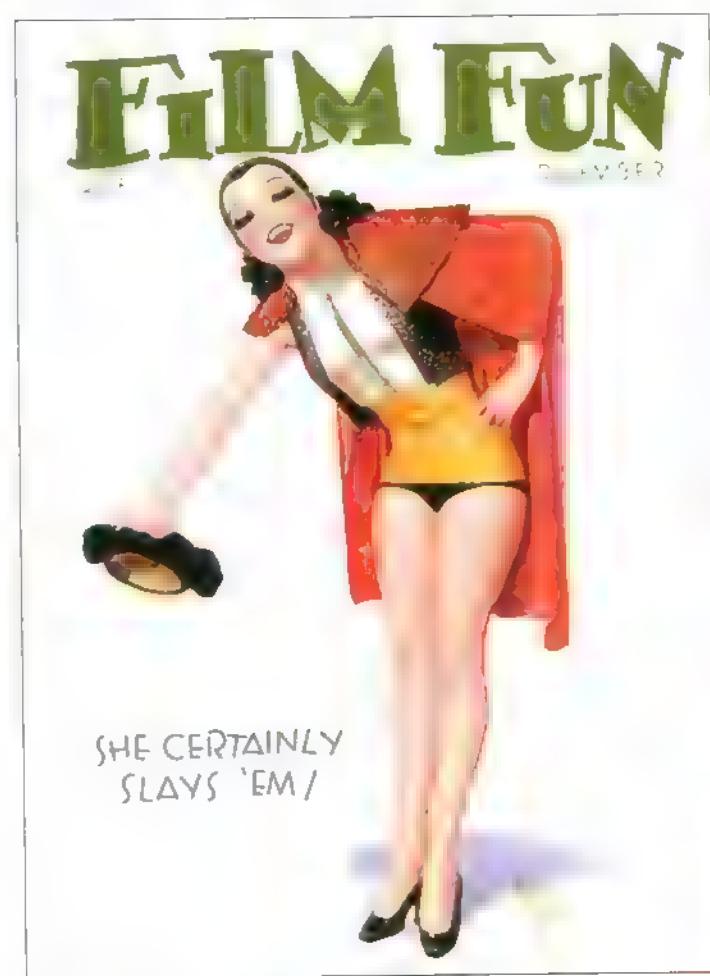
you're in order to contend with all that's around, that's his point.

These artists are burlesquing life, and having a great time doing it.

It's hard to see whether or not Bolles, Armstrong, and Petty gave any thought to how people they are all masters of exaggeration, color, and humor, and there is an overall light-hearted ambience to their pictures which radiates a carefree attitude. A feeling of good times being had by all. Each is an excellent draftsman, and each coordinates that quality to design without imposing their personal style on it. They can do this, but not to the degree that Petty can. This is because it's a tricky process since you can become the main attraction and easily dominate the subject, and this is in the work of many artists. In the case of Bolles, Armstrong, and Petty, however, not only capture the model and her beauty but also reveal and enhance it, as their styles were born of that beauty.

It's very easy to foul up pin-up art, and the last words, unselfconscious, guiltless, squat, full-on. If just one overly ambitious homely mom is wild, all the beauty, desire, and elegance you envisioned turns into that.

Bolles' art borders on being a cartoon. On the covers of *Film Fun*, *Gay Book*, *Judge*, and *Spee Stories* his artwork often even has a caption accompanying it. His cutie-pies sometimes seem to be made of rubber, and twist and bend about with impossible grace. He fit into his whimsical Deco design. His work appeared primarily on the covers of "pulps," magazines printed on cheap paper that catered to genre markets: romance, western, crime, sex, and humor. Some of the pulp titles he did covers for, such as *Little Tales*, *Bedtime Stories*, and *Flaming Nights*, had to be sold under a pseudonym, and *Film Fun* had its second *Seal of Approval* permit revoked by the U.S. Postmaster General in the early forties due to the circulation of "salmacious material." Bolles worked the bottom end of the commercial art world, earning about \$60 to \$150 a week when he could collect, while slick magazine art jobs were being paid from \$375 to \$600 for a small, black and white interior drawing. "A suspect," says Spike, "that, like many of the minstrels, Bolles sang for his supper or, or vice, because he had to eat, but because he had to sing."



Opposite: an illustration by Enoch Bolles for the October 1933 issue of *Film Fun*, published by Nuregal Publishing Corporation. Right: two versions by Enoch Bolles for *Film Fun*, done in the 1930s for Del Publishing Co., Inc.



Armstrong's best work was done for the covers of *College Humor* magazine where editors allowed him to pick his own model.

Finally, as a desipmer and dramatics allow him to simply the figure's outline while in the same time exaggerating it. The girths in the two Old Gold cigarettes deserve special mention here are set over nine heads in two-thirds of their bodies. Nevertheless, even figures still look real, while in average fat figures, like six heads tall, with a division of legs and torso being about equal, this coloring is also an exaggeration, or figure. In one, the whole figure when being finished off perfectly (using an airbrush) to a pale flesh color, with dark warm skin shadows, lead to a pale flesh tone, the whole figure being then being finished off perfectly, the whole figure being then being finished off perfectly.

to paint them the way he wished without editorial comment. His style, like his life, is fishing and lavish. He worked in pastels from time to model, sometimes doing six or seven to 12s ranging in size from three by three inches to four by seven feet. Easily one of the more successful commercial artists of his time, he had long-term contracts with *College humor* and the movie magazines *Photoplay* and *Sensational*. In the thirties, when the movie magazines began using photographs on their covers instead of artwork, he went to work for the Brown & Bigelow calendar company and became their best selling artist.

The artists of *high art*, of course, do not consider Belles, Petty, or Armstrong to be artists, at least not in the commercial art world proper. He is, until very recently. Their work now sells for anywhere from five to thirty thousand dollars a painting. Silke, of course, has been collecting the work of these three men since he first became aware of their work. Over the years, he's diligently tried to capture the same elusive spirit they used in their own work, and he still tries right on to imitating Petty's vermillion outline, but about as far as he's concerned, to no avail.

"I simply don't have the design skills of these artists, and it isn't easy for me to summon up that natural sense of humor and irreverence by the spirit I so admire. Then again, maybe it's just that, the way I work, he made it won't let me."

They have another story for him to tell.



Opposite: Illustration by George Petty for the February 1940 issue of *Esquire*, copyright Hearst Communications, Inc. Above: Illustration by George Petty for a 1946 issue of *True*, copyright 1946 by Fawcett Publications, Inc.



Old Gold

CIGARETTES



THE TREASURE OF THEM ALL

Old Gold

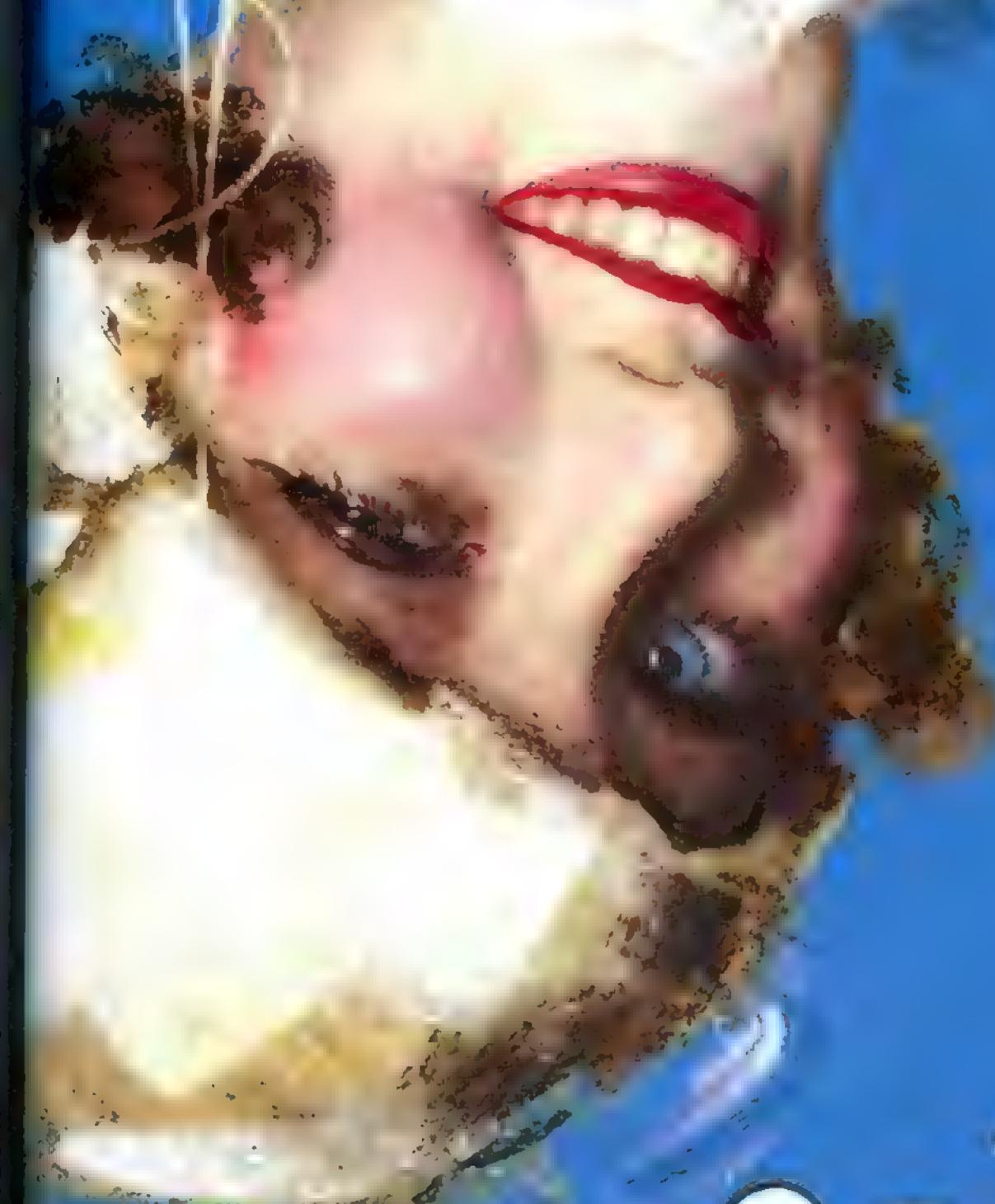
4 CIGS 1 1/2 IN. BY 11 LEAVES 1.00



Above and opposite: Illustrations by George Petty for Old Gold Cigarettes, copyright 1938 and 1939 by Lorillard Co., Inc.

# Lucim City-JamesAswell-WilliamChambers-Blue

# HighSkin



卷之三

# ouhHello



**Top:** Cover illustration by Rolf Armstrong for the December 1929 issue of *College Humor* published by Collegiate World Publishing Company. **Above:** Rolf Armstrong covers for the September 1932 and February 1928 issues of *College Humor*. **Below:** Rolf Armstrong covers for the June 1928 and May 1929 issues of *College Humor* published by Collegiate World Publishing Company.

# CollegeHumor

THE BEST COMEDY IN AMERICA



April  
35c

GEO. JEAN NA  
KATHARINE E  
MAY EDGE  
O. O. McIN  
ABE M  
COREY  
CYRIL

The Best Comedy in America

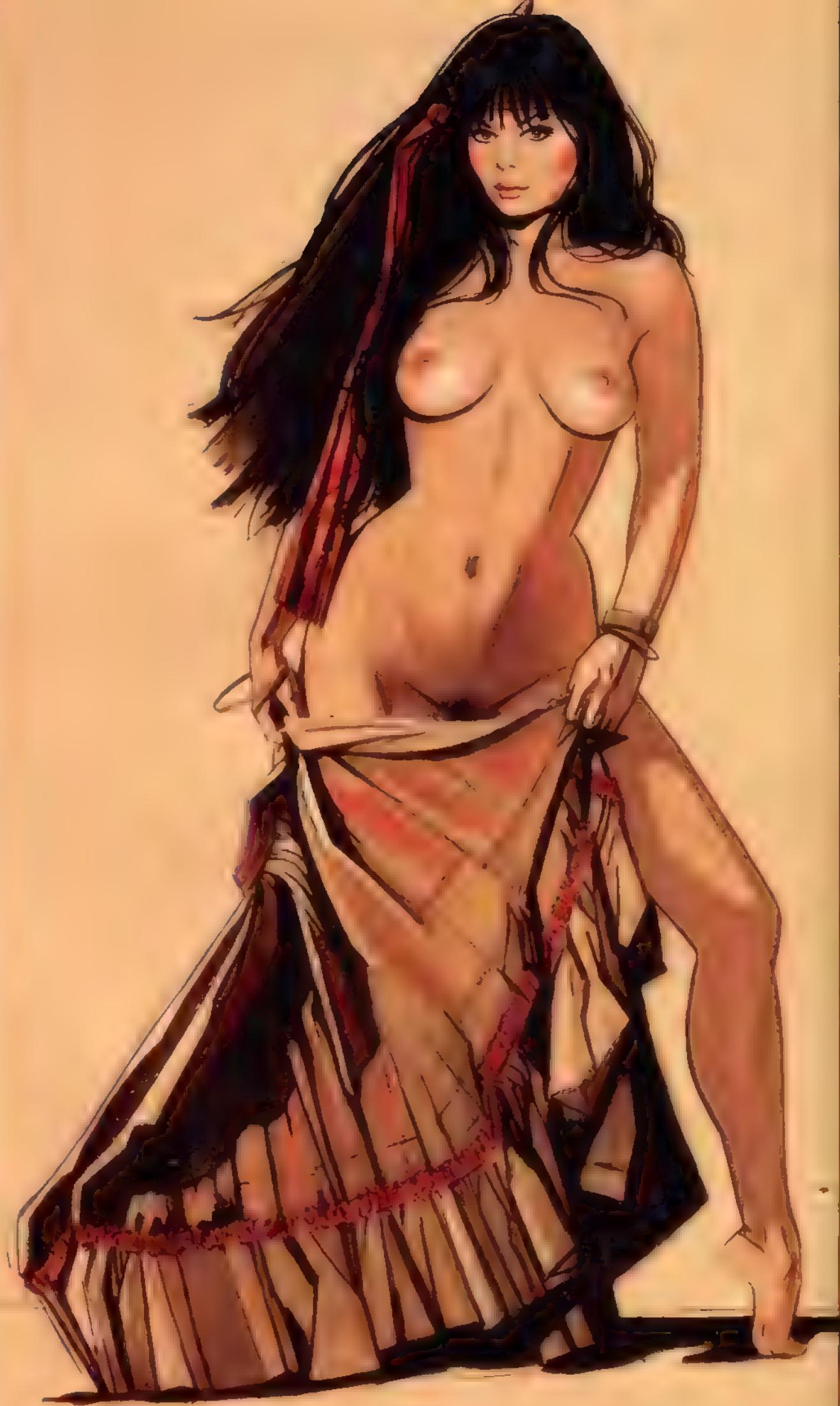
# College Humor



A PROM-MISS TO BE REMEMBERED

35 Cents

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## BARE NAKED LADIES

*"BB does not cast spells...when she strips, she is not unveiling a mystery.*

*She is showing her body, neither more nor less."*

—Simone de Beauvoir/Brigitte Bardot (1959)

Simone de Beauvoir claims Brigitte Bardot simply stripped her flesh and bones in an effort to show that she and her directors had no intention other than to show you a young woman who is completely blasé about the matter. Even unconscious of it, she was no primitive, no agenda or subtle shrewd purpose in her nudity.

Or so it was back in the early fifties, when Silke first saw Bardot up there on the silver screen. "I just loved it. Totally. You can't really imagine how, after all he was an insatiably impulsive boy with a frustrated libido. Seeing that beautiful naked woman was one of my first dreams of his childhood, and though I thought no bare shoulder could make me want to conjure up harems, orgies, suggestible acts of female kindness all day long, I had to look toward him. And when Bardot

dropped her towel in *Lover Is My Profession* and displayed the most beautiful naked body in Western civilization, not just a shoulder but the whole damn thing, she definitely, despite de Beauvoir's claims, cast her spell on Silke.

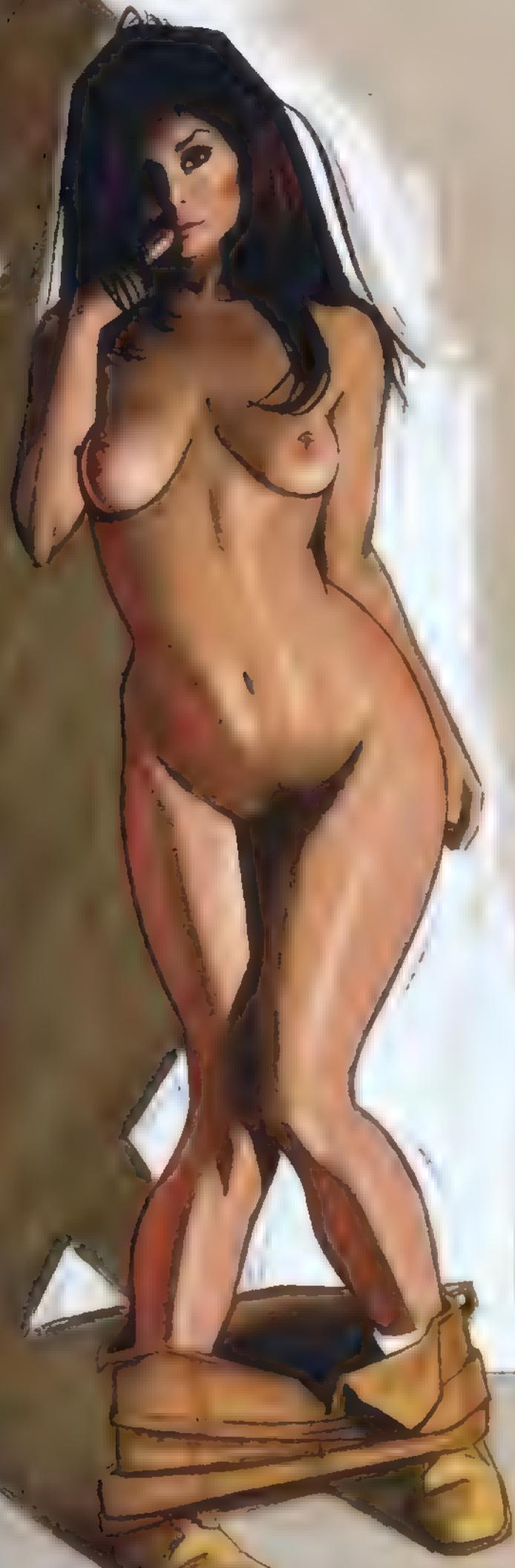
"BB was the first truly beautiful real woman I tried to possess with my pencil, and I can tell you that a pencil is a damn poor tool to romance someone with, particularly when you're a bumbling, inept, fool of a boy. The best I could do was scratch at her surface getting nowhere, and the frustration was enormous.

"I decided that there must be some reason why Brigitte Bardot was so much more beautiful naked than clothed. I figured that the Earth Mother, God, Nicholas Devil, or

whoever designed the world had to have had something in mind."

Years passed without any answers, but then in 1971, Silke discussed nudity in films with Alfred Hitchcock and Hitchcock told him, "You can't show a naked woman on the screen, or any part of her suggesting she is nude, a thigh or breast, without causing an erotic response in the audience." That suggested to Silke that Bardot and her coworkers were perhaps displaying her nudity in as natural a way as possible to get rid of the mysteries about her, thus making her even more available and more erotic. In other words, they were simply employing their theatrical craft, manipulating that magic distance between the performer and spectator in a manner that he was not used to, but one that he definitely reacted to.





That struck a cord with Silke. In reading about the great girl revues staged on Broadway in the 1910s and 1920s, he had learned that Florenz Ziegfeld in his *Ziegfeld Follies* had shown a unique ability at combining the exotic and glamorous with the familiar. Ziegfeld dressed his girls as turkeys, foxes, and baby chicks. He decorated them as playing cards, had them riding elephants, horses, and peacocks, sprayed them with silver and gold, and draped them in laces from around the world. Ziegfeld mixed high culture aesthetics with low culture entertainment. A sardou would be followed by a ballet, the sentiment of *A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody* by the vulgarity of *Ten Cents a Dance*. A few of Ziegfeld's beauties did perform partially nude, but by law they had to stand still and could only be seen by the audience from a great distance. That lack of motion along with the physical distance provided the magic distance necessary to glamour and eroticism.

Silke figured that Bardot produced her magic in the opposite way. On the screen, her body is twenty feet tall and she moves about seemingly unconscious of the fact she is totally unadorned. The high culture beauty of her body is combined with the commonplace familiarity of the set, a business office or bedroom, with a commonplace wardrobe, a simple white T-shirt or sheet, and with what was then considered a low class indifference to her nudity. These thoughts went together with another bit of magic Silke had observed.

Around the same time, the designer of the Tiffany's windows in New York was displaying the incredibly articulated beauty of the store's jewels in settings that were totally natural and commonplace, such as displaying diamonds and rubies in actual birds' nests.

Since Silke couldn't capture the necessary magic in the manner that Bolles, Armstrong, and Petty did, he wondered if he could produce his nude beauties in the manner the Tiffany designer did, by staging the incredible beauty of his models in natural poses in which they are unaware they are being observed, or are indifferent to it, and then painting them on commonplace cardboard, such as the pictures of model Lisa Marie Scott you see on these pages.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Further searching eventually led Silke to discover that much of ancient Greek art and sculpture venerated the female, particularly the naked female. "In their nudes, the aesthetic was beauty, but the essential ingredient was a profound eroticism. The artists' job was



That was Lindsay's easiest tie-photonography prior to World War I, and after witnessing the horrors of that war, Lindsay's passion for drawing "the nude naked, etiquette, distasteful female body" became even more intense. In this case, he accepted the one reference of "nudity" was the re-creation of the Whitechapel Drivers Club into the future, over all drivers and drivers all infections."

Lindsay's central motif of any work...a prime essential to a concept of life which accepts sex as his principle of condignity in space and time, which has neither beginning nor endimg, but which is eternal."

Certain he was on his way to an epiphany, Lindsay had another idea: perhaps the spirit he desired to evoke could not only be joyous, but profound, of course, in damn close to being total. And this, following that line of thought, is easily alluded with the compilation to be impotent, and as you know by now our human research led him to the writings of Norman Lindsay, an absurdist Australian artist who worked in the early part of the twentieth century, and whose work has had a revival in the last ten or so years.

If this were true, then whoever created the world had a淳朴的 reason to make up the nude Brigitte Bardot, as well as a whole lot of other women, so physically beautiful.

to stimulate erection in the male, as the audience so politely put it, to stimulate desire for creative loves in nature."

or our own are personally brutalized by poverty, bad health, or a natural disaster, it seems that we have very little consciousness of life is a struggle simply to survive. Life is essentially chaotic and dangerous, and that fate can strike us down at random. This consciousness has all but vanished from the American Good Life."

Indeed, Lindsay's philosophy caused a tension in Silke's thinking, because there is a moral imperative in it as well as an aesthetic.

It has pointed out, there has always been a tension between Silke's religious upbringing and his work, a tension that persists because of his respect for his father's beliefs and reverence for as well as for his own desire to draw. In full, provocative, nude women, Lindsay's philosophy allowed Silke to become brave enough to see a possible parallel in what he does and what his father did.

"I would've wanted to believe that, if I was good enough, my pictures just might help someone get through the day, or at least help someone enjoy getting through the day."

In Silke's view order, he eventually had to admit to himself that his habit of drawing nudes was both a moral imperative. It is such a pleasurable personal compulsion that he can not resist as he is continually charmed and beguiled by the wondrous, inimitable variety of female bodies so generously endowed by nature for those with eyes to see. It is difficult for him to discuss this subject without sounding like a dirty old man, so I'll spare him and quote from *Sex: A Film* Russell Flint's book *Models of Women* just to give you an example of how a man can totally lose control and start expounding on something as common as a woman's back:

"...sassy backs and pink backs, ivory backs and cow backs, thin backs and plump backs with lovely deep central grooves and backs with bony hollows, sinuous backs and modest backs; insolent backs and etched backs; classical backs and homely backs; backs of nymphs and backs of amazons; backs ideal and backs exotic; hasty backs and wicked backs and, or adorable straight white back, slim, supple and palely freckled—a back no poem can adequately praise..."

Who would say, "He's trippin'?"  
Well, me! Big time. Because for glamour alone the back is only the beginning. There are calves, calves, thighs and tummies of every wondrous variety, to say nothing of breasts, hands, necks, forearms, and





in the *girl*,  
is any value present in his later naked  
drawings? This subtle becomes clear if there  
is any quality of redemption, when the

performer and the follower of  
the particular storyteller and designer of the  
whole to let her take control. She does this  
invokes take control, and the basis in the  
him, the spell she casts, and the wings of the  
personal vision, when the model suddenly  
That is simply how *Silke* works. Despite the  
drawings, *she* is a reflection of the

They're more here and I was compelled to  
make myself, "Her poses are more human  
as a consequence, more... to see in her  
dances back to the differences of modern  
movement, and this idea of modern  
*Silke*, as I've pointed out, is a reflection of the

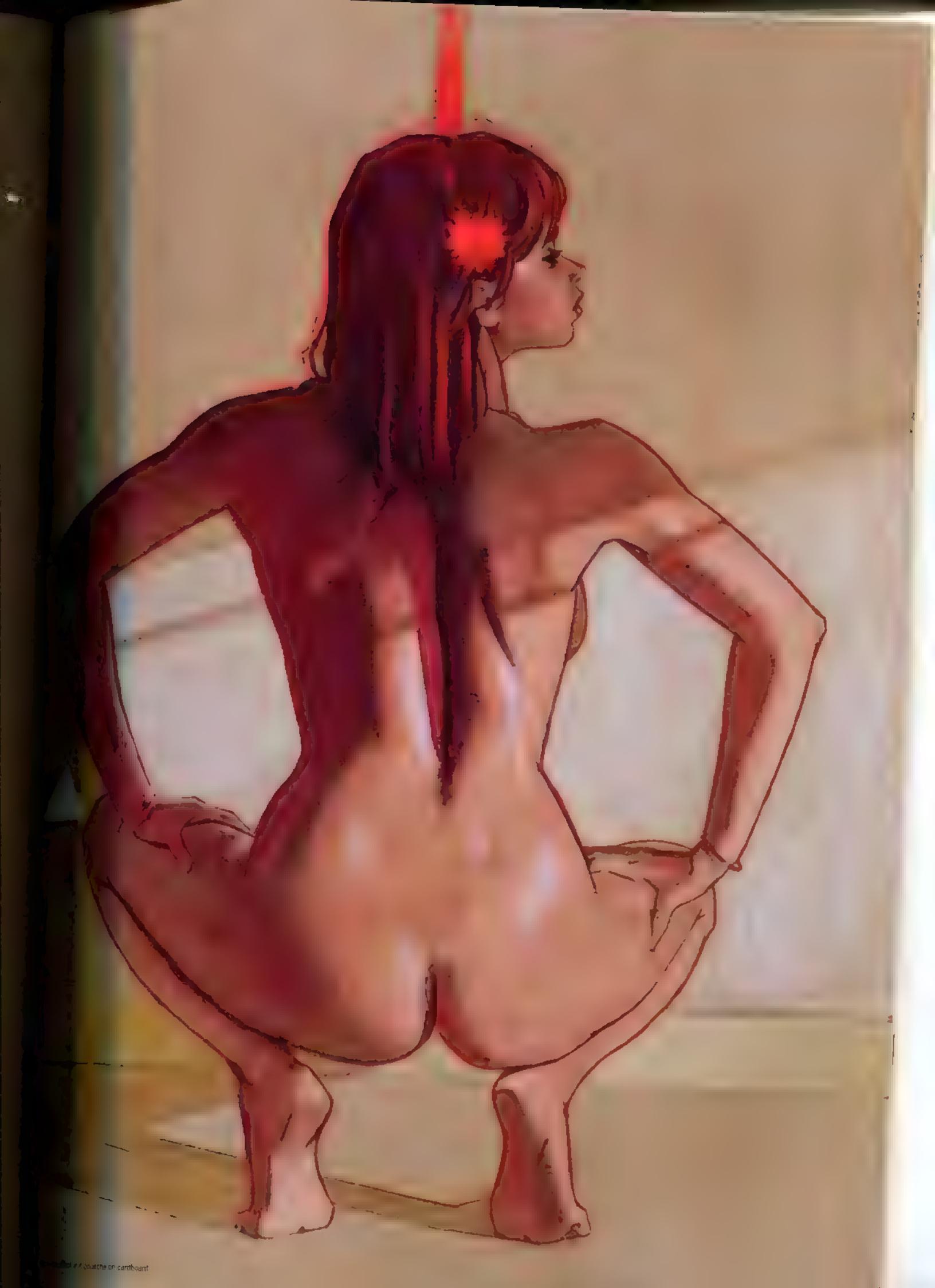
you see in these pages  
ones where I was had taken control, the ones  
the more he was attracted to the  
photographer, the more he looked at the  
planned on, but the more he was going to draw the ones best  
figured he was going to draw the ones best  
taken to decide on which ones to draw. He  
drawings, he started through the photos he  
weeks later when I had a hard work in the  
in her beauty as a woman. A  
to dress and undress in the most natural  
natural, looks inside ourselves, out, out of

the line of the camera, then off with it, a  
the look control of the shoot. She began  
to emerge along with her personality, as  
progressed, Lise's own idea of nudity began  
curves, defined. But as the photo session  
and without comforting the viewer. She  
short, without any awareness of her nude  
this is all the more in mind of the person  
she is asked about, will an look out of the  
in mind, he asked her to pose in the man  
illustrations in this chapter. With the visit  
her to his studio to pose specifically for  
woman and "a superb model," *Silke* just  
centerfold of 1996, a short, portly  
drawings, I say, of Lise Marie Seel

Take the drawings of Lise Marie Seel  
these pages. I say, of Lise Marie Seel

women don't end up on paper

whole draws his vision of beautiful  
and rewarding, as well as all his film  
is no different. But despite all his reward  
and the style, color and texture of the  
proper hats that fit in perfectly disastrous  
hair straight hair, so that the cut  
hair as black as midnight.







# DEVIL WOMEN

*"I like smooth shiny girls,  
hardboiled and loaded with sin."*  
—Raymond Chandler/*Farewell My Lovely* (1940)

Alas! Here it is, the big finale where an artist's heavy hitting ideas and high powdered emotions collide in a fabulous display. All his stylistic devices to produce a grand parade of profound and dazzling beauties—a "wow" finish. And what does he come up with? Big guns, large knives, no vampires.

Don't get it. It's silly. Comic book shtick.

For really, glamour art has no place for guns, swords, spears, or any other hint at crudity, no darkness whatsoever. It destroys the illusion. Destroys that light-minded innocence, carefree excitement, and ring of good times being had by all that we relish.

Alas! Silke insists

Now, I know men Silke's age do all kinds of childish things, play with toy trains, collect expensive sports cars, fall in love with whores, marry trophy wives, and drink Jack Daniels from a milk glass. Some even have the imagination to put the muzzle of a shotgun in their mouths and pull the trigger with a thumb. They're close enough to the end of the trail to see it clearly and so either want to get it over with or to party as hard as they can until it is.

But that's not Silke. He'll never retire, and if he just wanted to have fun, then he has a wife with enough party in her for a regiment of Marines. So what's going on?

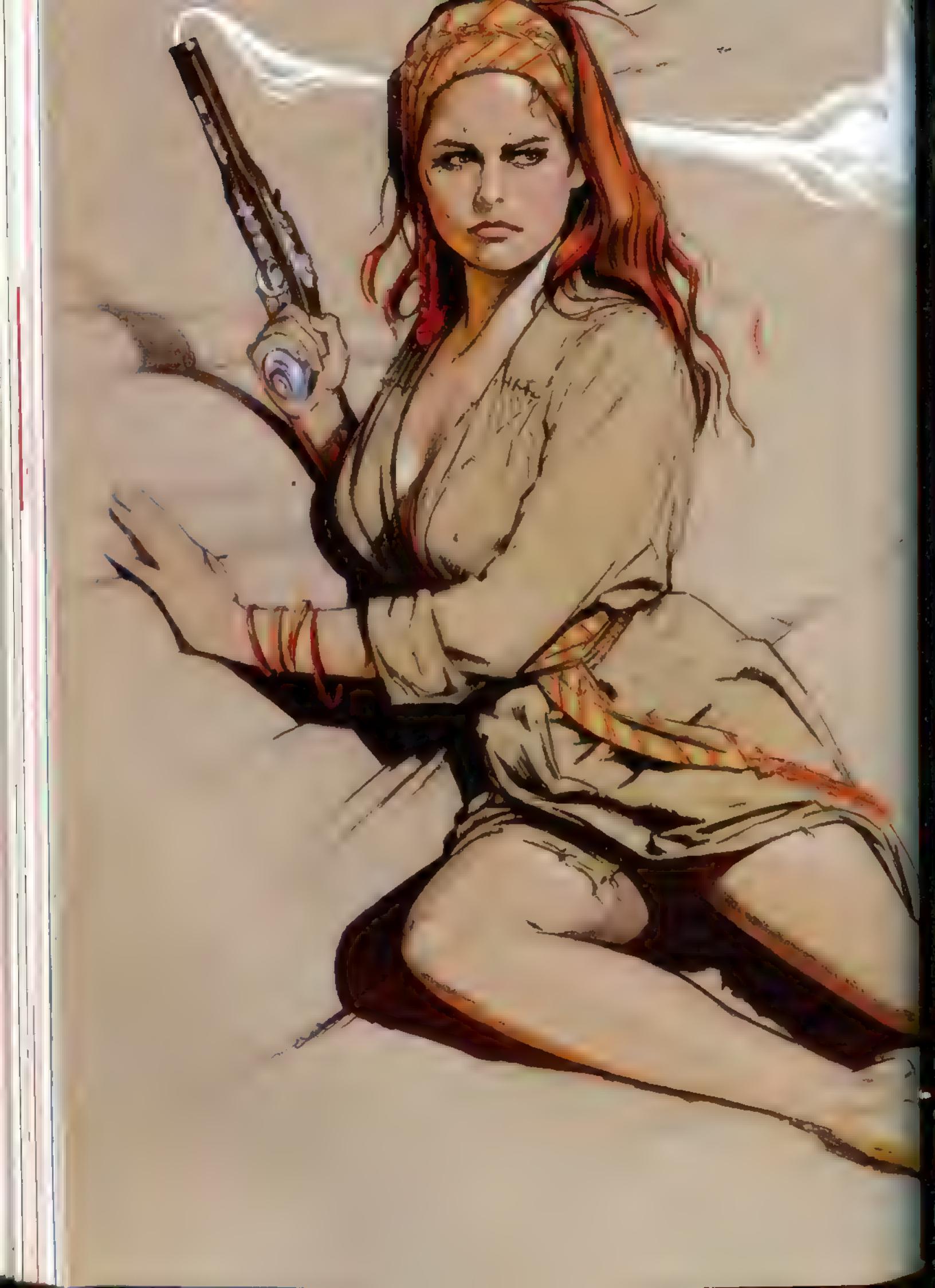
"I'm not really sure," Silke admits. "As odd as it may seem, I am still new at this business of painting pin-ups. And right now, at this stage in my work, for reasons

I don't fully understand, putting a gun in the hand of a defiant, impossibly beautiful woman evokes in me a light-minded joy that comes as close as I can get to that spirit of the commedia dell'arte. Undoubtedly this has something to do with my obsession with the female mystery and belief that strong women will eventually be the solution to the problems in our culture. Then again, maybe I'm just reverting to my childhood."

Well, that last part, at least, makes some sense.

Silke drew his first gun-toting devil woman when he was nine years old, Milton Caniff's Dragon Lady.

"Her exotic Eurasian beauty was simply too much for my boiling hormones to cope with.





That green blouse of hers, with the top button always missing so that it gaped open, was constantly being torn and ripped in, to my point of view, precisely the right places."

But the Dragon Lady's big attraction was the fact that she was dangerous. Deadly. She used her beauty to captivate and manipulate men and then trampled them like insects. On occasion, she did allow herself to kiss a man, but never let herself love one. She was a beauty and a beast, and she challenged little Jimmie because she didn't behave the way you were supposed to in his puritan, romantic vision of the world. Consequently, she triggered young Silke's incorrigible imagination and insatiable curiosity, leading him to suspect, with anticipation, that there were untold worlds of wonder and delight out there somewhere for him to find.

Strangely enough, little Jimmie's Bible studies did the same thing. "You can't read that book without being beguiled by Judith, Delilah, Jezebel, and Salome. And it doesn't take much imagination to suspect there is a lot more to their stories than the Bible reveals. Consequently, I wanted to know all about those dames. I mean, here was all the stuff of great drama, temptation, seduction, sin, violence, redemption, the triumph of evil and the defeat of the just. And these women weren't against it. They were for it.

By searching through libraries and old book stores, Silke not only discovered the other side of those stories, but that he was attracted to other women with the same devilish appetites: Cleopatra, Messalina, Theodora, Lucrezia Borgia, Carmen, Lola Montez, Mata Hari, Lady de Winter, Caroline Cherie, Sadie Thompson, and a host of others.

"I loved them all, along with all of Caniff's devil dolls: Miss Lace, Rogue, Madam Samjak, Delta, Cheeta, The Maid of Nine, and the Duchess of Denver. And at this moment in time, even though I admire a woman most for her smile and laughter, I'd rather draw her when she's angry and armed. The mere presence of a weapon, a gun, sword, or knife in her hand represents her threat. It makes her dangerous. Exotic costumes help, but it is the weapon in hand that seems essential. It implies high-risk physical dangers, an adventure narrative with suspense, mystery, and drama. Pain. Death. Misery. And triumph."

Oddly enough, this beautiful beast aesthetic that addicts Silke didn't come from the comic strips, but from high culture

Abilities Across Ethnically Diverse Groups: The Relationship between Cultural Capital and Academic Performance





Dejah Thoris



**Above:** Linda Darnell as Miranda Cross in "Ruse," watercolor and gouache on paper. Copyright 2004 GrossGeneration Comics Inc. **Opposite:** Vampire with a gun and without bangs, ink, watercolor and gouache on paper. *Vampirella* copyright 2004 by Harris Publications Inc.

What they came up with were some real nasty girls, what today's politically correct critics refer to as devil women.

Some smart boys had started to define these women back in the middle 1800s. Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had seen women as voluptuous, amoral predators. Poet Charles Baudelaire claimed women were the incarnation of evil. And poet Georges de Feure stated, "Woman is consumed by a sexual love, given to all excesses, the trunk where all vices spring, the source of all the ill in the soul of every forbidden delight." These guys were serious dudes, so they were either of a something they didn't really understand, or had some personal problems. Whatever the case, they scared people.

You must remember that I'm not discussing the twenty-first century, or any of the Eastern cultures, but Christian Europe during a period in which Puritan thought and morality controlled both the conscious and unconscious lives of the overwhelming majority of people. The populace fooled around a lot, particularly the rich, and people were deceived and murdered just like today, but in those days they felt really guilty about it, particularly about their sexual indiscretions. The prevailing idea was this—if men wanted to stay healthy and in control, they needed to guard their vital juices from essence-stealing man-eaters.

The paranoia was that sex could kill you. The problem was that the beauties appeared on stage, in novels, the ballet, and paintings were saying that it just might be worth it.



According to Silke's historical hocus-pocus, this is what happened: the Eternal Nymph had finally decided to show her serious side, her strength, so she cast off the clownish roles she'd played on the illegitimate stage and took center stage not only in the legitimate theater, but also in novels, poems, paintings, and the ballet. As she did, she gave up her lighthearted, big-foot humor and took on a dark, satanic amorality. She became a nightmare woman who enjoyed enslaving men, and stealing their power and pride. She knew that men fall for this kind of stuff, and the arts portrayal of her suddenly began to make them fall hard.

The prime example of the Nymph's new role was Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. He wrote it in the 1890s, but the censors did not allow it to be performed in England until 1918. It was just too dangerous, because *Salomé* was portrayed as a sexy child in a sadomasochistic relationship with John the Baptist. She was the totally prosaic "femme fatale," both a virgin and dominatrix. Her story held all the erotic ingredients, dance, desire, death, dismemberment, and both the Christian and pagan ecstasies. It was set in the East, which to white folks was an erotic playground, a realm of ancient mystery, of the harem, Odalisque, Scheherazade, the Sphinx, and the "yellow peril." A place of sexual license where passion and violence rule.

Pierre Louys' novel, *The Woman and the Puppet*, also disturbed the status quo. It's the story of a man who degrades himself for a powerful, independent, self-determining beauty who, in another sadomasochistic romance featuring adultery and prostitution, incites her male lover to murder without remorse or sentiment. The book was condemned, but in time the story would appear again and again, as did Frank Wedekind's Lulu plays and Richard Strauss' opera *Salomé* in which the child-woman has John the Baptist beheaded because he refuses to satisfy her lust. In these stories, as well as in the paintings and poems of men like Klimt, Lindsay, Paul Verlaine, and Thomas Mann, there was a desire to establish contact with the elemental in life, with a vital and irrepressible energy, with the Eternal Nymph. They believed in the continuity of life as a fundamental aspect of their art, and while that continuity, like the images and prose they produced, was erotic, brutal, violent, and tragic beyond individual fate, it was an essential reaffirmation of life.

The critical high point of this movement, and of high art in the twentieth century, came in Paris in May 1913 with the presentation of Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring*. It was a ritual of birth and death in pagan

Russia, a ballet created to evoke the mystery and great surge of creative power that arrives each spring. The performers were the infamous and brilliant dancer Vaslav Nijinsky and the Ballets Russes de Diaghilev.

Both Nijinsky and Serge Diaghilev, the most famous maestro/producer of the last century, were masterminds of provocation. They had presented overt eroticism in their ballet productions of *Scheherazade* and *The Afternoon of the Faun*, but the eroticism in *The Rite of Spring* was an open rebellion against Christian morality.

The reaction of the critics and audience was shock and surprise. On opening night, cries of condemnation and acclamation erupted from the crowd of celebrities as well as from the bourgeoisie. People had been scandalized



and portions of the audience fled the theater in rage, while others cried tears of joy.

Lust, not God, had now become sacred.

Nijinsky and Diaghilev believed, as did Andre Gide, Marcel Proust, Louys, and other rebels of high culture at that time, that the artist must be amoral, without sexual morality. This was a total departure from the mores of the time. Nevertheless, the problems of beauty and the human form were primary in their work, and this was in strict adherence to the motifs and standards that the classicist believed to be necessary in the pursuit of art.

Today, our politically correct critics condemn this early femme-fatale movement,

claiming their efforts were just and for men to impose their childish, me "dream girl" vision of the female unsuspecting world. That, no doubt, occurred. Men do that. But while the Stravinsky, Wilde, Klimt, Lindsay et al. may have been awkward and inexperience, they may have only scratched the surface of what was to come, their visions first recognition since the decline of the Roman Empire of a non-male, non-spiritual and religious presence within the human condition, a force of creative destruction that was promising to change and change the world—a female force the ladies never got a chance.

The next year, in August of 1914, World War I began and for four years the world was torn apart. After the war, the anti-culture landscape changed.

Shaken by the horrors of the war, the failure of the civilized world to prevent the once self-assured leaders of high culture—religious, political, and artistic faith in nearly all the pre-war cultural institutions, and began to abandon them to tear them down. Eager to join the revolution, many of the major artists abandoned the ideas, spirit, and aesthetics of *The Rite Of Spring*, but embraced the revolution, the surprise, shock, and sense of Being perceived as a rebel because of compulsion. Consequently, surprise, and innovation became the central of the modernist movement, and still Some modernist art is indeed revolutionary and brilliant, but it abandoned the idea sexual stimulus that drives the continuing life and rejected all narrative and subjective subject matter, particularly the female image. In short, it muted itself, consequently had nothing to say or do about the essential motif of the Twentieth century, the freeing of the female from domination and her resurrection as a sexual force in our lives.

Well, that's how Silke sees it. He, of course, was not around for all of this, having been born until 1931. What he knows about it he learned late in life, but as he was growing up, the influences of Wilde, Klimt, Stravinsky, and others could be found everywhere he looked. Why? Because the majority of the world's creative talents were at the beginning of the Twentieth century far more opportunity and freedom in the suddenly exploding world of the illegitimate arts, in low culture.

The Eternal Nymph, of course, was already bumping, grinding, and flashing her skirt in the circus, carnivals, vaudeville, and

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burlesque houses, and the fabulous Broadway girl revues. Crowds of artists, writers, photographers, art directors, hair stylists, and photographers who still venerated the soul of the female and her generative spirit only followed her onto these stages. And then, with the advent of silent films, they followed her onto the silver screen. There, she did her act as a vamp in the form of Theda Bara, Pola Negri, and a host of other silent femme fatales, and as the "It Girl" in the person of Clara Bow.

He was too young to see those beauties run about in the darkness at the picture shows. He could only find glimpses of them in old magazines until 1966 when he created a film exhibit for Expo 67, and finally got access to the major studio vaults to view the old silent films. But when "talkies" came he was right there in the balconies

Oakland's Roxie, Fox Oakland, Central, Grand Lake, and T&D theaters where the lure of the pagan female captured his innocent eyes; Jean Harlow in *Red Dust*, Maureen O'Sullivan in *Tarzan and His Mate*, and Marlene Dietrich in *The Devil Is a Woman*, *Shanghai Express*, and *The Scarlet Empress*. "They all had their way with me," and so did Paulette Goddard, Claire Trevor, Maureen, and Barbara Stanwyck."



Above and opposite: *Vampirella*, ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper. *Vampirella* copyright Harns Publications, Inc. Private Collections



"In 1923, Pierre Louys' *The Woman and the Devil* merged in the form of *The Devil Is a Woman*, starring Marlene Dietrich. It had trouble with the film censors, but was made again in 1950 with Maria Felix in the lead, and again in 1958 with Brigitte Bardot, who also titled *A Woman Like Satan*. And she was them all.

And when film noir arrived, he was right there in the darkness again to watch the women beat up things in films like *Human Desire*, *Blonde Fever*, *Kiss Me Deadly*, *Double Indemnity*, and a hundred others. In this dark world, naked and loaded women wrecked havoc with hardboiled dicks, gumshoes, police, keep men, gangsters, and other losers, losers, schemers, and do-gooders. The women, except on rare occasions, are always no match for the jaundiced lives and attitudes these dolls flaunted.

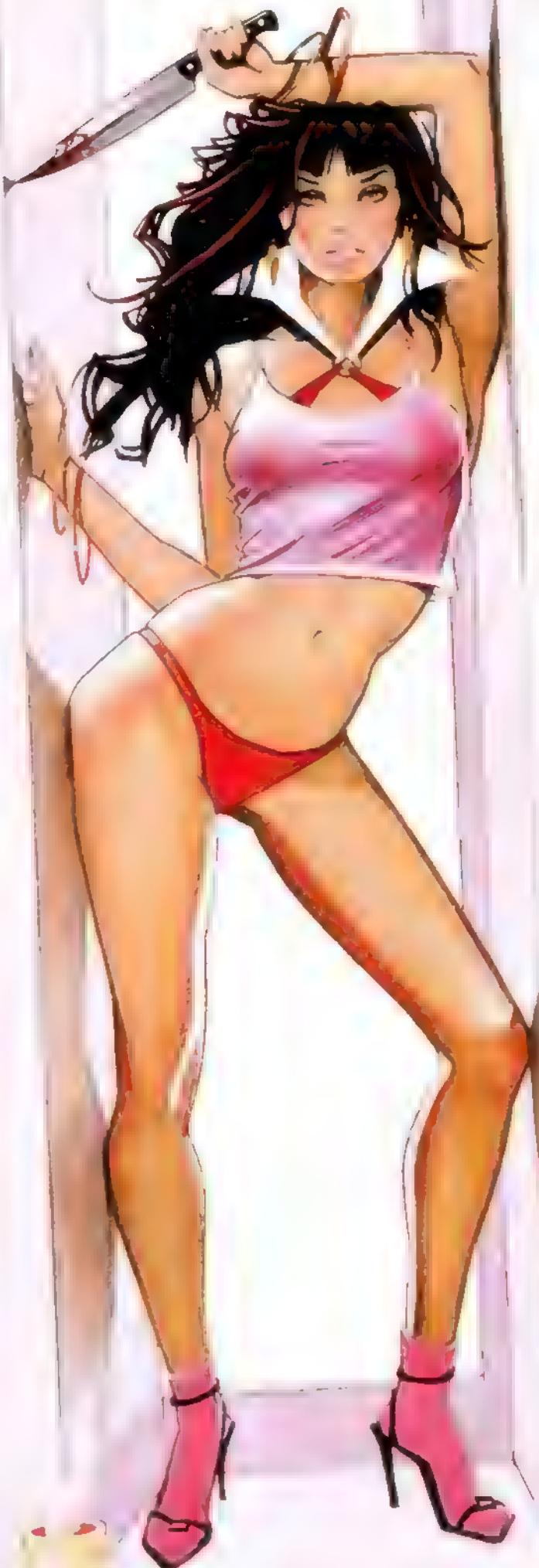
"They weren't all bad, of course," says Silke, "but the interesting ones" Silke's favorites, however, were the women created by the underground crime writers.

James M. Cain's Imabelle in *A Rage In Hell*: "Now Jackson could see the face and its mate plainly. A high-yellow sunburst face was framed in the light of the fire. It was Imabelle's face. She was looking directly into Jackson's eyes. Her lips formed the words, 'Come on in and kill him, daddy. I'm a tumbler.'"

Raymond Chandler's Dolores Gonzales in *The Little Sister* who murdered for love: "She was black and a pulse beat in her throat. She was exquisite, she was dark, she was death. And nothing would touch her, not even he saw."

Dashiell Hammett's Brigid O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon*: "I haven't lived a good life, she cried. 'I've been bad—worse than most, I know—but I'm not all bad. Look at me, Mr. Spade. You know I'm not all bad, don't you? You can see that, can't you?'"

Then the 1950s arrived, and Gina Lollobrigida, Brigitte Bardot, Sophia Loren, and Claudia Cardinale lit up the darkness as the picture shows. Silke found his adult women: "They all had an unwashed beauty between, and an edge, a dark side. And I wasn't the only one who found them irresistible. All of us whose job of work was fiction and fantasy were tired of the glitter and pretension with which the Hollywood film



Opposite: Bettie Page, cover for the trade paperback edition of *She-Devil Queen of the Nile*, ink, watercolor, and gouache. Private collection. Right: Vampi at Home, ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper. © 1990 Simplicio copyright Harris Publications, Inc.



industry continued to create her. We wanted our heroines to be strong, to make love, just like the characters.

Oddly enough, however, the heroes created by the pin-up artists had an influence on Silke's formative years.

"Like everyone else, I never took pin-ups seriously. They were simply naughty to me when I got to art school, and I began to have an appreciation for some of the pin-up work. I still wanted it to be better, to be more stylish, tasteful, and I also couldn't admit to myself how much I loved the work of Petty and Bolles. And then I finally did admit it. I still wanted to see, to justify it, to find hidden values in what I had in Dietrich, Stanwyck, Marlene Dietrich and Bardot. And that concern is still at play. I want to, in some way, honor those actresses, to recreate their strength and beauty. That's probably why I draw them so frequently. And somehow, I put a gun in the hand of one of my pin-ups. I feel like I'm close to creating a magnum opus that reaffirms the power of the pin-up and the continuity of life—just as Halle, Stanwyck, Astor, Bardot, and Dietrich are for me."

But when Silke talks like this, it's not just Dave Stevens, Stevens will often pole for awhile, then he'll hang up and say, "Baloney, Silke! All you want to do is get their bones!"

"Maybe Dave's right. But maybe that's the justification? Maybe if I want to be a pin-up, then maybe the viewer will, and I'll do my job?"

His job? Hmmm, that sounds like a good deal with Kipling's philosophy, and which reminds me of something. Stevens is married to a very loving, no-nonsense, straight-shooting, and occasionally courageous woman. Consequently, I've seen no real strength or reality in the devotions you see on these pages, or, if you're in a practical frame of mind and need a motive rather than an abstract reason to explain Silke's obsession with strong women. So, I suggest you consider Kurtsa Stevens, Chicago Southside girl raised in the projects, a single mother and a survivor who is now the vice-president of a bank, and whose life's story is as far from her husband's as it's possible to get. Therefore, whenever he gets too childish, too wrapped up in his fleshy fantasies, and particularly when he

...is taking himself too seriously, he is, once again, subject to a sudden, sharp blow outside the head. And, fortunately for him, he is no longer quick enough to duck.

She won't argue about that, but somewhere inside him he'd still like to think his devil women are his attempt to find a quality of exaltation in the voluptuous joy and gaudy taste of a gutsy dame. Well, maybe. But the one real certainty in his life is the work. His current obsession is devil women. But tomorrow, who knows? Right now he has a moment for placing his dangerous beauties in the company of one of those battered, well-worn adventurers who dare to pursue him. With all the people that influence him, and all the books he reads along with his well-present imagination and curiosity, he could abandon his devil woman obsession in a minute. Even give up being a glamour artist. Will he? Not even he knows for sure. That's how it is in his world.

ROBERT E. HOWARD

Right: Robert E. Howard's Dejah Thoris, version two, ink, watercolor and gouache on paper. Copyright 2004 Robert E. Howard Properties LLC. Collection: Following spread, left: Denisse Hidalgo from *My Superink* watercolor, and gouache on paper. Copyright 2004 Generation Comics, Inc. Private Collection. Right: Robert E. Howard's Red Sonja as she appears in his short story *Shadow of the Black Flame*, ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper. Copyright 2004 Robert E. Howard Properties.







# RED SORRY

Silke



Above: *Spicy and the Wary Recruit*, ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper. Opposite: *Trail's End*, posed by Silke and his wife Kurtesa, ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper. Private Collection



## HOWARD PYLE



## J.C. LEYENDECKER



## NORMAN ROCKWELL



# APPENDIX: ILLEGITIMATE ART

Throughout almost our entire history, artists created their work for the enjoyment of the clergy and the socially and financially elite, for the privileged classes that made up high culture. Most of those artists came from the same group. For around ten thousand years, two to three percent of the people controlled the art world.

The vast majority of the common people had no say in it. But around 1890, events conspired to give them a voice.

At that time, the sale of artwork consisted almost entirely of original work. The primary markets were in Paris, Berlin, London, and Rome, and in a minor way New York and Philadelphia. Art schools were in the same places. In these urban centers, a small group of artists thrived artistically and financially while a slightly larger group, supported by family wealth, thought they were thriving, and an even larger group went hungry. From this latter group came the legend of the "starving artist."

There were exceptions. Illustrated books provided a market for a small but excellent group of artists who, due to the limited abilities of the printing process, worked almost exclusively in black and white. But books were too expensive to produce in large numbers, and only the rich and wealthy middle-class could afford them. The other

exception was a group of painters in France called Impressionists: Degas, Lautrec, Manet, Van Gogh, Renoir, Seurat, Gauguin, Pissaro, and so forth. They rebelled against the prevailing tastes in fine art and experimented with subject matter and techniques. For a period of time, the consumers of art rejected their work, but as time passed and their work became familiar, it sold to the same two to three percent. To the elite.

Common people contented themselves with what they saw in churches and museums, and in the crude artwork appearing in the newspapers, almanacs, and penny dreadfuls, the predecessors to pulps.

Then things changed radically.

In 1890, there were only four major magazines available to the American public living in metropolitan areas, primarily on the East Coast, *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *Century*, and *Munsey's*. Each sold for thirty-five cents an issue and had a circulation of about 100,000. These magazines featured articles and fiction illustrated by artists who worked in the classic narrative tradition. Their paintings and pen drawings were reproduced in black and white by crude woodblock engravings which cost around \$300 each, and which took two to three weeks to produce. Both the artist and the engraver got credit on the printed picture.

Fifteen years later, in 1905, there were 7,500 magazines being published, as they were available everywhere in the U.S. On average, each magazine sold between 50,000 and 300,000 copies a month. The majority of them featured artwork by a steadily growing number of excellent artists and a few of them even printed pictures in color. The same phenomenon was occurring throughout Europe, but the greatest growth was in America. The general public could finally find pictures created expressly for them at their local magazine stand, or in their mailbox.

In addition, starving artists all over the world finally had a marketplace. A profession, art had become a career not exclusively for the wealthy, but for anyone with the talent, a lucrative career.

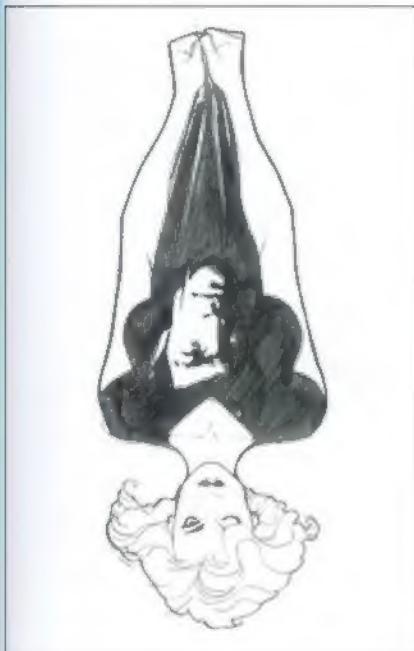
What happened?

In the early 1890s, the major magazines began to use a new engraving process, photoengraving, invented in the mid 1880s. This process cut engraving time to two hours and the cost to twenty dollars. The invention of wood pulp paper and fast rotary presses also cut costs and time. In addition, literacy rates in America along with leisure time. At the beginning of the twentieth century color engraving was invented, and in 1902 the U.S. Postal Service instituted rural free delivery

The might even be tickled pink by a little hydroelectric technology.

But as we hopefully made clear, like us a relic of the past. He'd like to understand what the young comic book artists are up to, but doesn't. "I don't know. Maybe they are just desserts," Oscar says. "I don't know. Maybe they are the future, and maybe it will all work out somehow. Maybe someone will say about them what someone once said about Oscar Wilde: Oscar's so good at the extras that he doesn't need the essentials."

which has always plagued print-up artists, but are being driven by some other stimulant. Either they're applying our current culture where the surface is everything and the spirit and soul are forgotten, or they're reflecting a variety of influences, including the traditional beauties who can not be seduced without the help of a wrench, motor oil, and a hammer. Consequently, they're producing drawings, and mechanical imitations with metal daddies, and a variety of rubber girls, vinyl girls, leather girls, and all varieties of number girls, with hydroelectric nipples, etc.



ADAM HUGHES

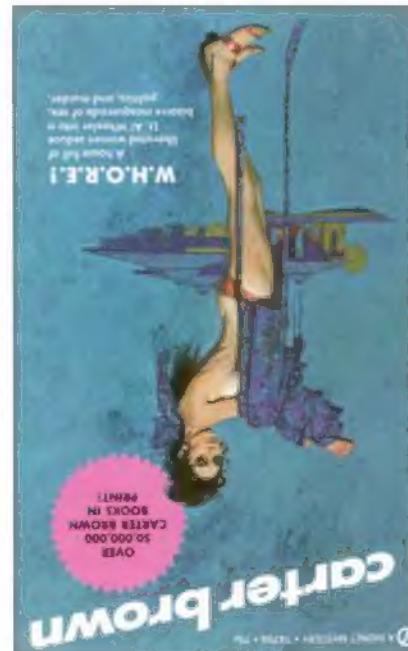
The loss of a mass audience has, of course, altered the nature of pin-up art, and it no longer derives its spirit or style from the illegitimate theater. From the spirit and style that originally gave it its power, but from some older source of inspiration. As Stilke sees it, the young girls artists in the comic book field seem to not only have lost control over that overtly ambitious hormone

even millions.

Currently, the largest number of *field* artists work in the comic book field, and a few, such as Adam Hughes and Dave Stevens, produce gorgeous, unlikeable heroines who romp and flit on comic book covers to convey, not only the power of the Nymph, but her spirit. But comic books themselves are also no longer a mass-culture item. A good sale for a comic today is around 30,000 copies, where they once sold in hundreds of thousands.

Today, pin-up art is still socially and more-  
likely unacceptable, and still illegitimate even  
though no longer a popular culture art form.  
Only one counterculture artist, Olivia, has a  
truly national audience, and the best of the  
painters of women, Robert McGinnis, who  
made his mark painting dangerous ladies for  
paperback covers, has gone legitimate.

But, as Spike fully understands, they always have been, the chances appear slim.



ROBERT MCGINNIS

But for reasons too complex to discuss here, from around the 1960s on the illegitimate arts have flourished as meritandise and founded the last forty or so years, there seemed to be more opportunity than ever for creative talent, but the manipulators of popular culture had discovered that they are able to fabricate a product that is just good enough to make them millions of dollars without surrendering control to the imaginations and visions of the best talent available. No doubt there are talents out there today

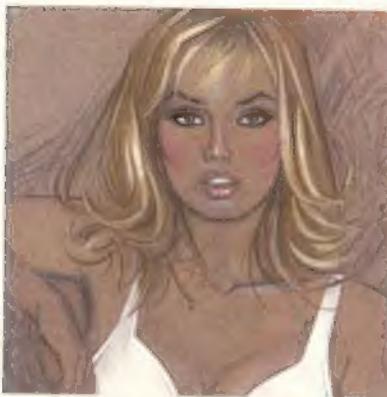
Starting in the late 1980s, the talents, the less talented, and the untrained in every field of the arts rushed to the new marketplaces, movies, radio, magazines, paperback novels, and television, resulting in tons and tons of cheap, vulgar and sentimental stories, songs, pictures, books, and motion pictures, and scattered among them were the finest works of art of the twentieth century. The rush, of course, continues to this day.

But the revolution making the visual arts available to the masses was only part of a much greater revolution. Due to developments in technology, almost all the artistic disciplines underwent transformations as almost the same time, making the visual arts dramatic as those in the visual arts and almost the century of the ultimate arts.

for those reasons. Spike calls the field "illegal ultimate art."



GILLETTE ELVIGREN



Jim Silke at his studio in Woodland Hills, CA. Photo by Greg Preston.

**Starlets and showgirls. Hollywood heavies.  
Comic-book heroes and corrupt virgins.  
Pagans, teasers, and nude goddesses.  
Welcome to the delights of carnal temptation—  
to the world of the pin-up.**

**F**ew artists could tell a story like Jim Silke's—an artistic coming-of-age tale populated by the world's most gorgeous women, with creative geniuses like Sam Peckinpah and Alfred Hitchcock in supporting roles. From his Grammy Award-winning stint as a music industry art director to his years as a magazine publisher, glamour photographer, screenwriter, and comic-book artist, Silke's sensual vision has made a distinct and lasting impact on contemporary culture. Now, for the first time, Silke shares his charming and insightful account of life as a pin-up artist. With sharp prose, stellar wit, and a dazzling array of delicious portraiture, Silke captures every curve in his titillating career, from his first encounter with a live nude model, to his enraptured slaving over illustrated images of Bettie Page, Brigitte Bardot, and scores of other legendary lovelies.

Lavishly illustrated with over 100 new images by Silke and classic pin-up artists George Petty, Coby Whitmore, Enoch Bolles, Al Parker, Rolf Armstrong, and others, *Pin-Up: The Illegitimate Art* is a smart and sassy romp through the twentieth century's love affair with pin-ups. Autobiographical, academic, and utterly audacious, this book is a must-read for lady lovers and pop-culture enthusiasts of any generation.

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